



## Trump's populist experiment begins

Trump/Pence usher in new era, but where facts fall could determine fate

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – America is now a week into its experiment with the populist President Donald Trump. It comes as the “post-truth” presidential race has morphed into an administration operating on, as senior advisor Kellyanne Conway termed it, “alternative facts.”



Melania and President Trump, Karen and Vice President Mike Pence, Michelle and President Obama and Vice President Biden at the inauguration. Lower photo is Gov. Eric Holcomb's view of Trump and Chief Justice Roberts right after he was sworn in.

At Trump's side throughout the inaugural ceremonies, the gala balls and through a flurry of cabinet appointments, swearing-in

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## Trump's victory sinks in

By **TONY SAMUEL**

INDIANAPOLIS – For me, it finally sank in at the inauguration last Friday. It was finally real to me that Donald Trump was our president. It didn't seem real on election night because it was almost 3 a.m. when he finally



gave an acceptance speech, and we had been kicked out of the JW Marriott's ballroom an hour earlier. Some of us lingered by the televisions in the lobby but I finally made it up to our room and watched his speech with Anita as the kids slept – pretty anti-climactic.

The next morning was surreal and the weeks that followed were a flurry of some campaign-related activities while



**“After reviewing her record, I share the concerns expressed by many Hoosier educators, students and families that Betsy DeVos lacks the commitment to public education to effectively lead the Dept. of Education.”**

*- U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly*



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trying to get back to normal work. The holidays hit and we even took a family vacation to try to get away from it all before the start of our Indiana legislative session.

**So I never really** had a chance for it to sink in, but it finally did as I listened to our new president give a powerful speech, where he essentially took the first major step in fulfilling the goals he set forth during the campaign. The speech showed the world that he meant what he campaigned on and was not reluctant to share this vision boldly in front of supporters and skeptics alike. During the campaign, I often said that he was going to be a bold and decisive leader. He has shown this to be true during the transition and in his first week in office.

Many people have asked why I supported Trump from the start and how did I know he could win? It does actually come down to the leadership aspect. Despite all of the differences between this and other campaigns and despite all of the distractions, when you are picking a president you should be selecting someone with leadership capabilities and a vision to use those qualities to move the country forward and make it better and safer for all Americans. For me, that person was Donald Trump.

**Many others felt** the same way, from Indiana's own Mike Pence, who played a huge role, doing a tremendous job on the campaign trail as he will now as vice president, to Rex Early, Suzie Jaworowski, Cody Reynolds and a small group behind the scenes. But even more important to the effort in Indiana were the thousands of volunteers and hundreds of thousands of Trump supporters

around the state. These folks gave us a first on-the-board, 20-point victory in Indiana, helping the down-ballot Republicans sweep into office. Those same Trump supporters essentially ended the nomination process six months earlier with a sweep of all 57 Indiana delegates on primary night.

We all knew that Donald Trump had the strength to lead this nation and we were inspired by him. As the campaign wore on, I was amazed at what he was able to carry on his shoulders; taking on 16 other candidates through the primaries and debates while also battling the national media, the Democrat Party and candidates, and the Republican naysayers. He only got stronger throughout the long arduous effort and he was able to distinguish himself from Hillary with a message that resonated with America because he was talking about issues that concern



us all.

**The criticism will** continue from all sides. We took a wrong turn Saturday and actually walked through all of the protesters as they marched with their very creative and colorful signs, some with language that cannot be printed in this column. The protests did, however, reaffirm that we have a lot of work to do to bring this country together and that there must be dialogue.

I know some will scoff at this notion, but I believe that President Trump has the goal in his heart to unite the country and has the personal qualities to do that.

He was great to me on a surprise phone call in April to ask what was needed in Indiana before the primary. He's been extremely friendly and approachable when I've talked to

him in person. He was wonderful to my wife and kids when they had the chance to meet him, an encounter we turned into our Christmas card. He is sincere and genuine, loves people and loves this country. That's a pretty good combination on the personal side.

**Combine those** qualities with his professional determination and his drive to always come out on top and you have a man of action who will work to make America and Americans successful.

I had a small role, a walk-on part in the war, as the song goes, but I'm honored to have been of some help to our new president. I'm also very glad to have the opportunity to write this column for Howey Politics. I'll get more into issues as



President Donald Trump arrives for his swearing-in last Friday at the U.S. Capitol. (HPI Photo by Gov. Eric Holcomb)

we move along and I'll try to share some stories from the campaign trail. Rex and I and others made over 50 county visits in nine weeks, so you know I have some good ones.

Most of all I want to make it clear that it's okay to admit that you like Trump. A lot of us voted for him. And even more importantly, it's okay to root for his success as president. His success is our nation's success. That's what we need now as Americans. ❖

**Samuel was vice chairman of President Trump's Indiana campaign and works at SamuelSolutions in Indianapolis. He becomes a regular HPI columnist.**

## President Trump, from page 1

ceremonies and executive orders repudiating the Obama presidency, is Vice President Mike Pence, who serves as a beacon to congressional Republicans. They, like the rest of America, await the true nature of the Trump presidency.

At the U.S. Capitol last Friday, the populist billionaire unleashed a warning shot at the existing power structure that courses through both parties in an inert capital city. By week's end, Amazon sales of George Orwell's dystopian book, "1984," were soaring. It's the 1949 classic of a society where facts are distorted and suppressed in a cloud of "newspeak." It comes two years after Pence, as governor of Indiana, attempted to install JustIN, a government-based news service that quickly died after it was leaked to the Statehouse press corps.

"For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost," Trump said as a light rain began to fall. "Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left, and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs; and while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land."

Cameras showed former Presidents Obama, George W. Bush and Jimmy Carter grimacing, as were some in the assembled Washington establishment behind him.



"For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost," Trump continued. "That all changes – starting right here, and right now, because this moment is your moment. It belongs to you. It belongs to everyone gathered here today and everyone watching all across America. This is your day. This is your celebration. And this, the United States of America, is your country. What truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people."

With that, Trump may have signaled that he is a truly independent president. The Republican Party nomination delivered him to the White House, but he is not beholden to its norms and ideology.

The address shifted into an Orwellian zone, when Trump said, "But for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now." By Wednesday, Trump was suggesting he might send in federal troops to quell the murderous violence in Chicago.

**Finally, Trump struck** a nationalist tone that could have easily come to the beat of "build that wall" and "lock her up." Trump said, "From this moment on, it's going to be America First. Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit

American workers and American families. We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength. I will fight for you with every breath in my body – and I will never, ever let you down. America will start winning again, winning like never before. We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams.”

To the Eastern elites and the Washington insiders, President Donald Trump’s inaugural address on Friday was described as everything from “dreadful” by George Will, to alarming, authoritarian, bombastic and brooding.

But to many Hoosiers, with some 57% of them voting for Trump on Nov. 8 and 53% of Republicans backing him in the May 3 primary where he clinched the GOP nomination, it was sweet tonic, conjuring up imagery from the days of President Andrew Jackson, a populist man of the people who carried Indiana’s five Electoral College votes three times as the state grew and developed. Indiana was a distinctly Jacksonian state with deep distrust of Washington and central authority. By the 21st Century, the state had more than 11,000 elected officials, reflecting an inherent distrust of the executive elites.

**Trump advisor Steve Bannon** told the Washington Post that Trump’s address was “an unvarnished declaration of the basic principles of his populist and kind of nationalist movement. I don’t think we’ve had a speech like that since Andrew Jackson came to the White House.”

It’s hard to reconcile the 21st Century speak and Twitterscape with the florid 19th Century prose of President Jackson. But in his March 4, 1829, address, Jackson bowed to the people, who would later trash the White House in a drunken inaugural celebration, saying, “While the magnitude of their interests convinces me that no thanks can be adequate to the honor they have conferred, it admonishes me that the best return I can make is the zealous dedication of my humble abilities to their service and their good.”

It was a start for a presidential administration unlike any in the television and Internet era. It buoyed Trump’s angered, hard-scrabble supporters and those seeking to blast the status quo into bits, and alarmed the intellectuals and academics who are concerned and fearful of what comes next. Within 24 hours, it descended into the darker recesses of the new president’s magnificent brain.

Saturday included a fascinating first journey out of Washington. While President Obama went to Elkhart on his first trip to make the case for his stimulus plan, Trump went to Langley, Va., in what many believed was an attempt to make peace with the CIA and national

intelligence services. Earlier this month, Trump compared U.S. intelligence services to “Nazi Germany.” Standing in front of the CIA Headquarters’ hallowed wall featuring 117 agents who gave their lives for the nation, President Trump launched into a diatribe against the “dishonest media.”

Politico reported: Trump lashed out at his critics, boasted of his appearances on magazine covers and exaggerated about the size of the crowd at his inauguration. Later Saturday, press secretary Sean Spicer blasted the media, saying, “This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration – period – both in person and around the globe. These attempts to lessen the enthusiasm of the inauguration are shameful and wrong.”



**President Trump took to** Twitter to criticize the nearly 500,000 women who marched on the Capitol Mall the day after his inauguration, and the 10,000 who turned up at the Indiana Statehouse. “Watched protests yesterday but was under the impression that we just had an election! Why didn’t these people vote?” Trump tweeted. “Celebs hurt cause badly.”

Then came Sunday. In a bitter and embarrassing quarrel with NBC Meet the Press host Chuck Todd, Conway gave an answer that will define the early era of the Trump presidency. “You’re saying it’s a falsehood, and Sean Spicer, our press secretary, gave alternative facts to that,” Conway said.

This was the post-truth election giving way to the alternative-fact presidency. Politifact, the Pulitzer Prize-winning political fact checker, not only gave Trump the 2015 “Lie of the year,” and for his 2016 campaign, it reported 14% of Trump’s statements were half true, 19% mostly false, 33% false and 18% “pants on fire” lies.

Trump supporters would frequently say he was “telling it like it is,” but that really means he is conveying his perceptions as opposed to facts. Conway had advised prior to the inaugural that the media shouldn’t seek the Trumpian truth through his words, but through his heart.

**The weekend fueled** stories of Trump’s senior staff feuding over trying to keep the boss on message while others reinforced what was described as his building rage. The Washington Post reported Monday: “As his press secretary, Sean Spicer, was still unpacking boxes in his spacious new West Wing office, Trump grew increasingly and visibly enraged” over the crowd size reports.

On Monday, the Post’s Karen Tumulty, reported: Donald Trump, having propelled his presidential campaign to victory while often disregarding the truth, now is testing the proposition that he can govern the country that way. In the first five days of his presidency, Trump has put the enormous power of the nation’s highest office behind spurious – and easily disproved – claims. He began with

trivial falsehoods about the size of the crowds at his inauguration, but has since escalated a more grave claim that undermines the trustworthiness of the nation's electoral system. In a White House reception Monday night for congressional leaders, Trump alleged that as many as 5 million illegal votes were cast in the 2016 election, denying him a popular-vote majority. It was a claim that Trump had made in the aftermath of the election, with no evidence to back it up. As unsettling as that was in a president-elect, the implications are far greater when something clearly untrue is spread by a commander in chief, and when the weight and resources of his administration are brought to bear in amplifying such information."

And on Wednesday, Politico reported that two of the officials who will be in charge of carrying out President Trump's terrorism detainee policies, Defense Secretary James Mattis and CIA Director Mike Pompeo, were "blindsided" by reports of a draft executive order that would require the CIA to reconsider using interrogation techniques that some consider torture, according to sources with knowledge of their thinking. Lawmakers in both parties denounced the draft order on Wednesday even as White House press secretary Sean Spicer said he had "no idea where it came from" and that it is "not a White House document." Trump himself did little to quell the unease about the document on Wednesday, telling ABC News he believes waterboarding "works," though he added he would defer to Mattis and Pompeo on the issue.

**It's unclear who wrote** the draft order or whether Trump will sign it, though members of Congress in both parties were taking that prospect seriously on Wednesday.

These words and events brought about cascading controversy in the media. Financial Times chief foreign affairs commentator Gideon Rachman observed, "This spectacle of obvious lies being peddled by the White House is a tragedy for U.S. democracy. But the rest of the world, and, in particular, America's allies, should also be frightened. A Trump administration that is addicted to the 'big lie' has very dangerous implications for global security."

CNN's Brian Stelter in his Reliable Sources newsletter said, "On Red Facebook and on conservative news sites, I'm seeing two types of responses to Trump's illogical beliefs about illegal voting: One, to just ignore it and pretend this controversy isn't going on. Two, to blame the media for picking on the president and blowing this way out of proportion."

**Axios CEO Jim VandeHei**, observed on MSNBC to Greta Sustern, "This is not about crowd sizes; crowd size has no bearing whatsoever on how someone is going to govern. You're talking about an allegation that goes to the heart of our democracy, ... [E]veryone keeps thinking, 'Ah, he's gonna change, he's in office.' It's Donald Trump.

He's not going to change. People have to take a deep breath and understand that sometimes facts are facts."

**John Dickerson said** on the CBS Evening News, "The reason it's important to have a president believe in things that are true is it creates a sense of belief in everything he says. The most important quality for a White House staff is the ability to tell a president something he doesn't want to hear, and contradict him when he believes something that's not true. And if they are not able to do it in this case, the question is whether they'll be able to do it on more serious matters."

In today's New York Times: Impetuous and instinctive, convinced of broad but hidden plots to undermine him, eager to fight and prone to what an aide called "alternative facts," President Trump has shown in just days in office that he is like few if any occupants of the White House before him. He sits in the White House at night, watching television or reading social media, and through Twitter issues instant judgments on what he sees. He channels fringe ideas and gives them as much weight as carefully researched reports. He denigrates the conclusions of intelligence professionals and then later denies having done so. He thrives on conflict and chaos.

And in today's Washington Post, it noted Trump's ABC interview "revealed a man who is obsessed with his own popularity and eager to provide evidence of his likability, even if that information doesn't match reality."

In the television age, America has had two presidents who repeatedly lied. Between 1972 and 1974, President Richard Nixon lied about his administration's involvement in the Watergate break-in and ensuing scandal. In 1998, President Bill Clinton denied having "sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky."

Clinton was impeached but acquitted and Nixon resigned just before impeachment. There is immense danger when presidents lie.

**But Republicans are** rallying around Trump. "Since Donald Trump's election, some Americans have made every effort to delegitimize our new president," U.S. Rep. Luke Messer (R-IN) wrote in an article appearing in the Richmond Palladium-Item. "These misguided attempts undermine our republic and our electoral process, and fuel divisiveness in our politics. If this trend continues, the damage to our nation could long outlast any damage done to its current leader. Now, it's long past time to move on and allow our new leader to govern. At this point, hoping our president fails is like hoping for the failure of the pilot flying your plane. You may not like the pilot, but everyone on the plane should want him to succeed."

This coarsening of American politics is sifting deeper into our societal skin. At the Indiana Statehouse, controversial Facebook postings by State Rep. Jim Lucas and State Sen. Jack Sandlin on "fat women" attending the Washington March and another about locking a dog and



a woman in a car trunk prompted House Speaker Brian Bosma to tell the Associated Press, that "the Twitter storm created by our president ... makes people feel this is an appropriate vehicle to communicate."

**Bosma added,** "We're elected officials, we're held to a higher standard."

Are they?

As President Trump unleashed an array of executive orders that will limit immigration, roll back EPA regula-

tions, restart oil pipeline projects, change CIA torture standards, and repeal Obamacare, the White House and media are roiled in a debate about what constitutes the truth. It comes in an era where purveyors of "rumors, gossip and innuendo" proclaim themselves to be "legitimate news guys," and when a news organization challenges an assertion, it is simply labeled "fake news" by the new president.

If we lose the concept of truth and hard facts, keeping the republic will become an arduous task. ❖

## Vice President Pence a heartbeat away

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – From the Hoosier perspective, here in the 2016 Center of the Political Universe, the notion that Vice President Mike Pence is now just a heartbeat away from the American presidency is not surprising. For a political generation, Pence has presented remarkable ambition. Last Friday, he reached the penultimate goal of his life.

Indiana has produced other ambitious modern men like Birch and Evan Bayh, Dan Quayle, Richard Lugar and Mitch Daniels, all possessing the 1600 fever at some point. With Sen. Birch Bayh, Quayle, Lugar and Daniels, there were significant to epic policy achievements that lent to the narrative that the White House was a logical final step. Birch Bayh wrote two constitutional amendments and Title IX. Quayle developed into a defense and national security stalwart. Lugar authored the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Reduction Act, convinced President Reagan to oppose apartheid, and helped end the rule of a Philippine despot. Daniels became the innovative governor.

**Evan Bayh** and Pence used the Indiana governorship to burnish their resumes primed for a national ticket. The policy decisions they made over the 12 years in office always seem to come through the political prism: Will this tax cut look good in a presidential campaign? Yes! Send state troopers

to Gary? Check. During the Pence governorship, his prime policy goals came through the POTUS prism: Record tax cut, check. Repeal Common Core, check. Take on Planned Parenthood, check. Restrict abortion, check. Defend religious freedoms? Check ... then uncheck.

**In Congress, Pence rose** rapidly to leadership. He was a spokesman for the conservative and evangelical cause. He was always in loyal opposition, even under President George W. Bush. He was the sunny bomb thrower, ready to pick a fight or draw the red line. And in 12 years, he never sponsored a bill that got that Bush or Obama signature.



**Vice President Pence takes the oath of office, and is seen with his family and President Trump. These are photos taken by HPI from the MSNBC broadcast and with a dry brush filter in Photoshop.**

The Indiana perspective on Gov. Pence is one where he inherited the robust Daniels mantle and became the classic caretaker. His greatest policy achievement was built on the Healthy Indiana Plan that Pence evolved in the era of Obamacare into HIP 2.0. Daniels created the Indiana Economic Development Corporation and Pence used it to make dozens of jobs and investment announcements. Daniels created Major Moves and Pence presided over the next generation of ribbon cuttings.

Gov. Pence never took on the fierce trappings of Daniels at the Indiana Statehouse. The Pence legislative enforcers were not feared as

they were in the Daniels era. There were staffing snafus such as the JustIN fiasco that eclipsed HIP 2.0, and the "last supper" photo that created the RFRA firestorm that essentially ended Pence's own 2016 presidential ambitions.

As Pence headed into a dicey reelection campaign, WTHR/Howey Politics Indiana polls showed him to be the most polarizing Hoosier politician of his era.

So there were some silent head shaking and eye rolling when Pence anted up for the Trump ticket, while dozens of other Republicans took a pass. When the nomination flickered on July 14, Pence boldly secured the nod. When Trump picked fights and created Twitter flares, Pence interpreted and made it all seem better. When his party establishment doubted, Pence exhorted them to "come home." While Trump won an Electoral College victory, he lost the popular vote by 3 million. Trump and Pence believe they have a "mandate."

The notion that Pence is now the "heartbeat away" prompts "who'd a thunk it" responses throughout Indiana today. This politician played his cards right and has arrived. But the circumstances are far, far different than when George H.W. Bush brought on Dan Quayle. Bush41

was as seasoned as anyone could be for the presidency, having the perfect credentials. And President Trump?



Vice Presidents Mike Pence and Dan Quayle meet before the ceremony begins.

**Conservative New York Times** columnist David Brooks observed on Inauguration Day, "We've never had a major national leader as professionally unprepared, intellectually ill informed, morally compromised and temperamentally unfit as the man taking the oath on Friday. He is all gut instinct, all blood and soil, all about loyalty over detached reason. His business is a pre-modern family clan, not an impersonal corporation, and he is staffing his White House as a pre-modern family monarchy, with his relatives and a few royal retainers. In his business and political dealings, he simply doesn't acknowledge the difference between private and public, personal and impersonal. Everything is personal, pulsating outward from his needy core."

Conservative Washington Post columnist George Will wrote earlier this week, "Leaving aside the missing element of grace and the improbability of his ever stopping to think, Donald Trump is the waterbeetle of politics. His

4 Drivers  
33 Goals  
1 Mission

FUELING ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY  
AND PROSPERITY  
STATEWIDE

INDIANAVISION  
2025  
A PLAN FOR HOOSIER PROSPERITY

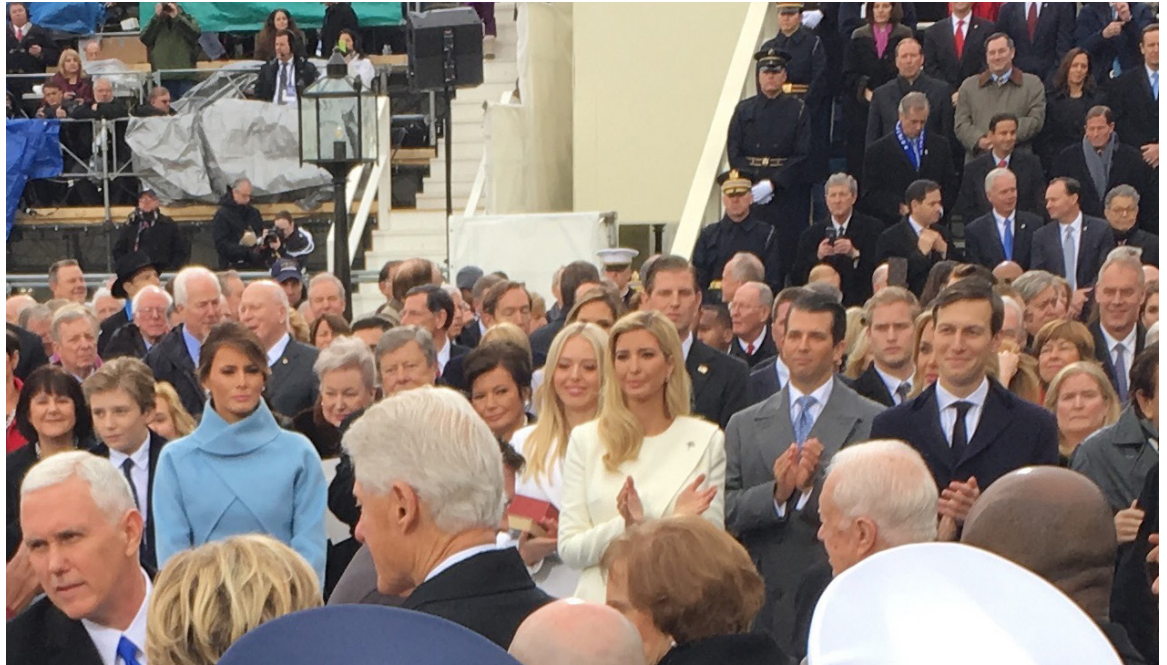
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feral cunning in manipulating the masses and the media is, like the waterbeetle's facility, instinctive. The 72 days of transition demonstrated a stylistic seamlessness with his 511 days of campaigning, which indicates that the 1,461 days of his term that begins Friday will be as novel as his campaign was."

As we enter the Trump presidency, we are told not to listen to his words, but accept what is in his heart. While Trump declares NATO "obsolete," Pence and United Nations ambassador-nominee Nikki Haley tell us it is relevant. When Trump declares he will provide post-Obamacare coverage to "everybody," he sends Capitol Hill Republicans into closed door meetings to find the trapdoor. While Trump talks of climate change as a hoax, his Interior nominee says it's real. While Trump equates Russian President Putin as an equal with Germany's Angela Merkel, Gen. Jim "Mad Dog" Mattis believes that there were Russian war crimes in Syria. While Trump flirts with waterboarding, Mattis and CIA designate Mike Pompeo suggest they will defy any such presidential order.

**As Brooks notes,** "The very thing that made him right electorally for this moment will probably make him an incompetent president. He is the ultimate anti-institutional man, but the president sits at the nerve center of a routinized, regularized four-million-person institution. If the figure at the center can't give consistent, clear and informed direction, the whole system goes haywire, with vicious infighting and creeping anarchy."

Washington Post columnist Jennifer Rubin, coming from the Eastern Seaboard opinion stables in deep fret, writes, "Someone has to set policy and give underlings marching orders; that person usually would be the president. Right now Trump will not or cannot perform that function. How then will everyone know what Trump



Vice President Pence with the Clintons, President Obama and marching in the inaugural parade

'means'; what is official policy on which hundreds if not thousands of smaller decisions can be based? Maybe Trump will abdicate that role to Pence, who will tell us what Trump is 'really' thinking. Trump's thinking, however, is so muddled that Pence cannot or should not be Trump's literal translator. Maybe Pence should just, you know, run everything."

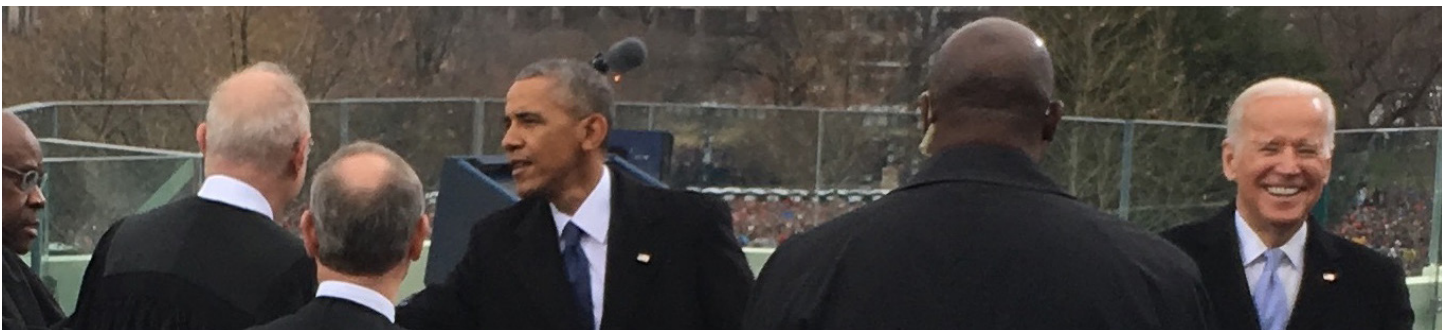
Despite President Trump's inaugural address assertion that he will "never, never let you down," in various Hoosier Republican salons and group think, there is conspicuous sentiment of a decent chance that before Jan. 20, 2021, it will be President Pence. Trump was asked whether he'd serve out a full term in July, and he responded with a mischievous smile, "I'll let you know how I feel about it after it happens."

So today, Vice President Pence is a heartbeat away. And perhaps one incident, one investigation, one quarterly earnings report, one Trump hotel bombing away from the destination of his enormous ambition. ❖



# Gov. Holcomb's inaugural photos

Gov. Eric Holcomb had one of the prime seats for last Friday's inauguration of Vice President Mike Pence and President Donald Trump. Howey Politics Indiana noticed him taking photos during the MSNBC broadcast, shown at right with Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. We asked him to share some of his images, presented on this page, including photos of Presidents Obama, Clinton and Bush, First Ladies Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush, Sen. Dan Coats with the U.S. Supreme Court, U.S. Rep. Andre Carson, and one of Gov. and First Lady Janet Holcomb (not sure who took that one).



# Political legitimacy

By MARK SOUDER

FORT WAYNE – Winning an election is one thing; winning political legitimacy is another. The current debate about crowd sizes, popular versus electoral vote, and fake news all revolve another equally salient point: Elections in America are anchored on Election Day results but that is just the start of a continual battle for “political legitimacy.”



This process will continue during an entire administration, but the first stages are the most important in establishing basic legitimacy: Election Day and debate about the results, transition, and inauguration and the first 100 days.

## Election results debate

When Trump raised doubts as to whether he’d accept the election results, the media went apoplectic and the Democrats mocked him. Trump won, and then many on the left refused to accept the results, challenging them way past any legitimate concerns about fraud. Fair observers realized that this unwillingness to accept the election totals was a fundamental challenge of the integrity of the voting process.

Furthermore, if there was significant fraud, the majority was on the Democrat side. It is a complex issue, but to deny that most election fraud now, and for all American history, has been in dense urban concentrations is, well, an alternative fact. It results in “fake news” by omission. This part of “fake news” is a problem that many in traditional media cannot even comprehend because of their bias. They see the issue as one of “commission” (i.e. printing “made up” facts) as opposed to creating a false story by omission of facts that would change the story from favoring their point of view.

The conflict over legitimate vote results was compounded by the fact that Trump defeated Clinton in the Electoral College vote decisively, but, thanks to California, she prevailed in the popular vote. Those who argue for a pure democracy and not a republic hated the concept of an Electoral College long before Donald Trump ran for president. They, however, hoped to utilize what they perceived as universal scorn for him to unite with what they perceived as general outrage against the Electoral College to de-legitimize his clear victory.

Trump countered these attacks with a series of

counter-attacks, designed to establish the “legitimacy” of his victory, some true and some that strained credibility (to use the kindest word possible).

He said that he would have won the popular vote if that was the way the winner was decided in American elections. That is very possible because he would have definitely altered his advertising, personal schedule and possibly his issue focus. He is a flexible man. I’m not sure what Constitution complaining Democrats were following.

He claims that he won among legitimate voters, implying that many voters should not have been registered, in addition to traditional fraud. Both are likely true, both likely would not have reduced but a small fraction of Clinton’s popular vote margin.

Trump claimed that his victory was massive, one of the largest ever. It was significant but his claim is demonstrably false.

While he had missteps, the initial Election Day debate was decisively won by Trump, and undermined the left for the next battle over the transition.

## The transition

President-elect Trump avoided any major personal mistakes. His biggest test during this phase was the formation of a new government. His combination of inflammatory tweets and selection of enough “original” high profile Trump people like Steve Bannon pleased his core supporters and distracted the media from substantive issues. Most of his choices were within the conservative range of experience and credibility.

Trump effectively used Mitt Romney and at-risk Democrat senators as foils to solidify his legitimacy. He summoned a wide variety of people to visit him at Trump Tower to further demonstrate that he was now in charge. Even his criticized usage of Trump Tower was a brilliant strategy to strengthen his aura

of business success.

The president-elect successfully stonewalled the release of many financial forms for himself and his cabinet, which minimized the constant media carping about small conflicts. The media history of nit-picking effectively undermined potential discovery of serious conflicts of interest.

While there were some hints of the problems that plagued his early campaign, Trump won the transition period so decisively that most Americans, even those who hated the results, were reconciling themselves with his presidency.

## Inauguration day and the first 100 days

The inaugural crowd debate was a disaster. His speech pleased his core who, frankly, cared more about tone. Many traditional Republicans blithely ignored the



parts they didn't like. He added no one to his support.

The "alternative facts" debate will be on-going. The lousy choice of words meant that that it came out as "an alternative to facts" as opposed to "other facts that the media had not included." This, of course, fueled the debate about what constitutes "fake news." These debates gave his "legitimacy" a negative hit and his continued obsession with defending every mistake could prove very damaging over the long haul.

President Trump's first executive orders upset most of those who were always against him, as did President Clinton's and President Obama's. However, they are what he promised to do and within a president's authority.

The revenge of a government bureaucracy through leaks, and the predictable tendency of all presidents to complain and then over-react to them, is magnified in Trump's case. More pointed things are leaked by a

hostile bureaucracy, and he over-reacts more severely. The fact is, however, that the bureaucracy was elected by no one and does not have the right to set policy.

The net of these early phases as to been to successfully negotiate the first mine fields, resulting in most Americans accepting him as a "legitimate" president. The protests increasingly seem to be the elongated whining of losers.

President Trump's challenge will now be to extend his somewhat broadened, but still shaky, majority into a workable governing coalition. His unorthodox style has thus far been blended more effectively with traditional governing than most expected. It will be interesting to see if he can continue to somewhat exceed expectations. ❖

**Souder is a former Republican congressman from Indiana.**

## Inaugural observations

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – Some people put on their bucket lists big events like the Super Bowl, the World Series, the Indianapolis 500 and other similar extravaganzas. You may



end up crossing the event off of your list with joy and other times with a shrug that says, "I can't believe that was ever on my list." Attending the inauguration of our 45th president was the fulfillment of one of my personal bucket list items and I was not disappointed.

My wife and I arrived in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday and packed a week's worth of activities into three days.

During our time in the nation's capital I experienced a plethora of interesting sights, sounds and, yes, smells. Here are just a few of my observations in no particular order of occurrence nor significance:

**Heading to** Washington, we were concerned about security. Reading national publications and watching network news reports pretty much had us convinced that we would be lucky to make it out alive, considering the "millions" of anti-Trump radicals who would be in town to disrupt the inauguration and exact their revenge on the Trump faithful. The reality of inauguration week was much different than the story line hyped by the media.



Security precautions for the inauguration and all of its associated activities were top notch. It seemed like there were three security officers for every ball gown. In my opinion, security people outnumbered protesters by a 10-to-one ratio. One look around and you felt instantly safe.

**Protesters were few** and far between. In fact, I didn't see my first protester until walking out of Union Station on Friday morning on the way to the inauguration ceremony. Instead of a slobbering, mad dog group of wild-eyed anarchists, I saw a peaceful hodge-podge of protesters who either were too cold or too old to work up much enthusiasm for their cause. The demonstrators standing outside of Union Station should be given credit for exercising their rights to free expression without interfering with our right to attend the inauguration.

Some radicals expressed their concerns for the plight of the politically oppressed by ransacking a Starbucks and a McDonald's restaurant. They then piled up some boxes, set them on fire (possibly to warm themselves) and then staged a vicious assault on a stretch limousine. After being sprayed down with Tabasco sauce by the Washington police, these bad boy insurrectionists went looking for another Starbucks so they could grab a chai latte and lick their wounds. This all happened about three blocks from our hotel, but if it had not been for the media, you would have never known it was going on. I've seen better fights in the grandstands at Wrigley Field over a foul ball.

**There was also some** concern over the type of service that visiting Republicans would receive from the working people of Washington, D.C. After all, it was no secret that Hillary Clinton received about 10 votes for every one Donald Trump received in the

district. That being said, the hotel employees, taxi drivers, restaurant workers and Metro staff were absolutely wonderful. They were kind, considerate, smiling, helpful and great ambassadors for their city.

Our first taxi driver, Mr. Chaudhry, told us that even though he voted for Hillary Clinton, he believed that everyone should give the new president a chance. A Hispanic worker at our hotel told my wife that she had been afraid during the campaign, but that now she was hopeful. These two small examples seemed to reflect the views of most people we encountered.

**Call me a sucker for** American exceptionalism stories, but I heard a touching one from our waiter, Antonio, a Bolivian-born American citizen. He has been in the United States for 30 years but he volunteered to us why he came. He told us that when he was a boy in La Paz, there was a statue of John F. Kennedy in the park. The park had been donated by Franklin Roosevelt. Antonio said that he felt that if an American was good enough to build a park for children in his country and that his government thought positively enough about an American to erect a statue, then he wanted to come to the United States. You could see his pride in being an American.

On Thursday we attended an event at the AT&T Forum. What a great surprise when former senator, and now Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats dropped by a group of Hoosiers. I can't tell you how proud I am that such a good, conscientious patriot like Dan Coats is in the position of keeping us safe while we sleep. Personnel decisions such as this one give me enormous faith that Donald Trump will be a great leader on national security issues.

Thursday afternoon we navigated the Metro system, once again, to the Capitol Hill Club for a meet-and-greet luncheon with our Hoosier Republican Congressional delegation. Indiana is truly blessed to have such a talented group of public servants working for us in Congress. Our entire squad are all stars!

**This might be a good place** for me to admit a past mistake on my part. In 1974, I worked in Washington, D.C., for former Rep. Bud Hillis. Each day I would take a bus from my dorm room on 19th Street NW to my office in the Longworth House Office Building. It was pretty quick transportation and there was always something interesting to see above ground. While I was in Washington, construction was being done on the monstrous project to build the Metro. It was an enormous project with a huge price tag. At the time, I viewed the expense as an unnecessary waste of taxpayer money for no net benefit. Mea culpa! Fifteen trillion dollars later in federal debt and the expense of building the Metro looks quaint. The Metro moved

hundreds of thousands of people during inauguration week without the first hiccup. It was clean, safe and very fast. Although I miss the view from above ground, the Metro rocks!

Thursday night was the time for the Indiana Society of Washington, D.C., inaugural ball, or what I like to fondly refer to as the adult prom. Boy would I have liked to have had the tuxedo rental and Spanx concession for this memorable event! Twelve hundred Hoosiers and friends were shoe-horned into the ballroom of the Grand Hyatt. I had high hopes that after I put on my tux and looked in the mirror I would be staring at James Bond. I quickly discovered that I still looked like Dr. Evil.

The Indiana Society ball was a great event featur-



ing a wealth of political luminaries, including former Vice President Dan Quayle, a full orchestra, glitz and \$11 beers after the cocktail hour.

**The beneficiaries of the** event's profits were a housing program for veterans and the art therapy program at Riley Hospital for Children. Karen Pence gave a nice presentation on the charities to an appreciative group of proud Hoosiers. I almost said proud Indianans, but thanks to Sens. Joe Donnelly and Todd Young straightening out the U.S. government, I can now tell it like it is. Yea, Hoosiers!

The highlight of the evening was the appearance and speech of Vice President Mike Pence, who gave a tearful parting speech that focused on the many great accomplishments of our great state. It was not a boastful speech, but rather one given with immense pride.

I can't begin to tell you how many people from other states told us how thankful they were when Mike Pence was chosen as the vice presidential running mate. Reading a steady dose of the negative local media over the months can make you forget just how capable and talented Mike Pence is. The United States and maybe even Matt Tully may learn that Mike Pence's skill set is uniquely tailored to make him a great vice president.

Friday and the big event of the inauguration finally rolled around. The planning for this event was not to be taken lightly by the inauguration attendees. The temperature was to be in the high 30s with a 90-percent chance of freezing, sneeze-like rain. Another critical consideration was restroom facilities. By my guess, there was one

portable toilet for every 50,000 people. The odds didn't look good for those with weak bladders. Many a woman was heard to talk about the adult-sized Depends that they planned to wear to the event. Folks, I'm here to tell you that there are some things that you cannot un-hear!

**With no coffee to wake** us and no liquids to refresh us, Mrs. Dunn, dressed like Mukluk of the North, and I made our way to the Capitol. Along with hundreds of thousands of our closest friends, we zipped on the Metro Red Line to Union Station and set off on foot for our viewing seats. As stated earlier, security was very tight and obtrusively visible. The inaugural attendees were very appreciative of the heightened security presence. It would be no exaggeration to say that the average security person heard, "Thank you for your service," at least 5,000 times.

The shivering crowd moved trance-like for their seats or standing room viewing areas like the exodus scene in "Fiddler on the Roof," showing our tickets at least eight times on the way. The crowd would lurch to a stop occasionally for the women to make a mad dash for the toilets scattered along the way. Mrs. Dunn can now conclusively state that the portable potties at the inauguration are equal to the design, quality and smell of those at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The seats we enjoyed, courtesy of Congresswoman Susan Brooks, were awesome. What a view! I must have taken 200 photos. Looking behind us down the long mall toward the Washington Monument, all we could see was a sea of humanity. In all fairness to Donald Trump, and as a counter to the outright lie of some media pundits, when the ceremony started, the mall was completely packed from the Capitol to the Washington Monument. Sorry CNN, I saw it with my own eyes and I took pictures. The crowd for the inauguration was enormous.

**As we were waiting for the** ceremony to begin, I was impressed by the incredible diversity of people packing in for the event. There were people of every race, creed and color standing side by side. There were Christians, Jews, Muslims and Hindus shoulder to shoulder wearing red "Make America Great Again Hats" and "Trump/Pence" shirts, hoodies, jackets and even pants. Defying the stereotype of the average Trump supporter propagated by the media, it became clearly obvious to me that Donald Trump offered a vast cross section of the American people a message that they believed and a vision of a better tomorrow for our nation. There was a palpable

feeling of joy that exceeded mere happiness that "our guy won and your gal didn't." It is hard to describe the incredible smiles that lasted through the cold, the rain and the long wait for the big moment of the oath ceremony. I will remember this joy for the rest of my life.

For all of my adult life, being a conservative meant losing slowly. We never won. We only delayed the process of erosion of our freedoms, the dry rot of our free enterprise system and the loss of status as the Shining City on the Hill. The joy I witnessed was a joy that emanated from a people who, for the first time in their lives, could believe that we can turn back the clock to a time of greater freedoms, greater prosperity and greater national security.

The most moving moment for me was when a youth choir sang, "God Bless America." Looking up at the Capitol Building with flags flying and every view adorned in patriotic bunting, I thought of the countless thousands of young men who lay at Arlington Cemetery across the Potomac River from where we were gathered. This moment, this time of peacefully and freely transferring the reins of government from one administration to another was what those men fought and died to sustain. I had chills go up my spine and my eyes misted over.

**I won't go into great detail** about the Trump speech; it has been covered by the media, shaded negatively for the most part. I encourage you to read his speech on the Internet or watch a video of it on the internet and judge for yourself whether it was dark and negative or a speech of hope and promise. The thing that struck me most about our president's inauguration speech was that he unabashedly promised that he would act with America's best interest first. What a novel and shocking concept that the president of the United States would put the economy, health and security of the American people first! I will sum up my thoughts very succinctly. It's about time! The speech wasn't flowery or full of wistful prose that makes Chris Matthews' leg tingle. It was a promise from the new sheriff in town that there are going to be some changes. Power to the people! Right on!

Friday, evening, just as we were returning from our revelry, former Indiana Republican State Chairman Mike McDaniel guided me to the appropriate metaphor that neatly summed up the status of the 2017 election. In the very back of the hotel gift shop, there was a coffee mug with Hillary Clinton's and Tim Kaine's photo on it. Beside it was a sign, 75 percent off. ❖

**Dunn is chairman of the Howard County Republican Party**



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**YOUR FRIENDS ALL HANG OUT HERE... DO YOU?**

# 5 Republicans eye '18 challenge to Donnelly

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**  
and **THOMAS CURRY**

INDIANAPOLIS – U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly is not one to shy away from a tough political fight, challenging U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola twice, winning once, and then lining up for a huge challenge, the 2012 unseating of Sen. Richard Lugar.

As we all know, a sub-context for his battle against Lugar was the stirring of the Tea Party movement and the rise of Indiana Treasurer Richard Mourdock that ended with the legendary Republican's upset in the 2012 primary.

Now with President Trump's epic rise last November, Donnelly's reelection bid in 2018 may have received a similar charge of luck. Defending his seat in red state Indiana with a "President Hillary Clinton" at mid-term would have presented a scenario fraught with danger.

Instead, Donnelly will repeat part of the 2012 script as he watches Hoosier Republicans thrash out what could be a third consecutive U.S. Senate nomination process. Five names are now in the mix, including U.S. Reps. Luke Messer, Susan Brooks, Todd Rokita, State Sen. Mike Delph and Kokomo attorney Mark Hurt, a former aide to U.S. Sen. Dan Coats.

Of that group, Brooks has the most cash on hand with \$1.38 million, followed by Rokita at \$1.31 million and Messer at \$845,205. All three have much to lose, as Messer appears to be on a speaker track, holding the House Republican Policy Committee chair, which is the fifth highest leadership position. Rokita could be in line for the influential House Budget Committee chair if current Chairwoman Diane Black runs for governor of Tennessee as expected, and Brooks has risen to the House Ethics Committee chair.

**Messer has indicated** to Politico that he intends to run and Republican sources tell Howey Politics Indiana that an announcement will likely come in early May. A "Draft Todd Rokita" Facebook page has surfaced on behalf of the 4th CD member, and Brooks had more support for the Indiana gubernatorial caucus last July than Rokita, where she narrowly lost on the second ballot to Eric Holcomb. With Gov. Holcomb likely to dominate that sphere of Indiana politics over the next four to eight years, there are

few places for ambitious House members to go. The most conspicuous opportunity is the Senate race.

Sen. Delph, R-Carmel, told Howey Politics Indiana last week that he also will weigh a run. "Two months in politics is like two years. So let's see what I'm thinking then," Delph said. If he does decide to join the fray, Delph will not back down from the challenge. "There won't be anybody else looking at it that dissuades me from what I will do," he said. "There will probably be a lot of people looking at it. I will make my decision independent of all that."

**Delph, who has toured** Tea Party cells state-wide extensively over the past seven years, pondered a 2016 race, met with a number of PACs in Washington, then decided not to get in. Many movement conservatives feared he and U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman would split that sector of the vote. A potential factor in a Delph bid would be abandoning his SD29 seat. He was reelected in 2014, defeating gay Democrat J.D. Ford, 15,140 to 12,744, in a race where Sen. Donnelly actively campaigned against him, going door to door with Ford during the campaign homestretch.

The most likely scenario would be a two-person GOP primary race, with the three House members sorting themselves out to avoid a repeat of 2016 when Todd Young defeated Rep. Stutzman. The dynamic of that race



U.S. Reps. Susan Brooks, Todd Rokita, Luke Messer and State Sen. Mike Delph.

changed in February 2016 when then-Gov. Mike Pence selected Holcomb for lieutenant governor, leaving Young and Stutzman to fight it out. Young's dominance on the money front and his campaign's skillful use of planting stories in the media gave him an easy primary victory.

Informed and reliable GOP sources tell HPI that the National Republican Senatorial Committee will target both Messer and Brooks, with the former having a small edge. Other GOP sources tell HPI that Brooks enjoys serving in the compact 5th CD and may not be up for a statewide race on top of her congressional schedule. There is also the prospect of a potential Trump cabinet post down the road when the initial cabinet begins to turn over. Sources say Rokita is preparing to gear up and may have the services of former Indiana Republican Party executive director Dave Buskill, who was fired on December. Buskill

is a former Rokita fundraiser. Rokita's problem is that he has created a range of enemies across the party, going back to his days as secretary of state, when he angered legislative Republicans over his redistricting proposals.

Messer has actually run in three CDs, losing to Mike Pence in a 2000 2nd CD race. He unsuccessfully challenged Rep. Dan Burton in the 5th CD primary, then returned to the 6th CD (formerly the 2nd) when Pence launched his 2012 gubernatorial bid. So Messer, a former state GOP executive director, has a statewide profile.

Messer has shown a willingness to take on Donnelly on the issue front. In February 2014 he created a video aimed at Donnelly. "The funding bill blocks the president's executive amnesty order," said Messer on the illegal immigration front. "Some of your colleagues in the Senate don't like that. But, last November you said the president doesn't have the authority to grant amnesty through executive order. Whether you still feel that way or not doesn't really matter. By voting to block debate, you're voting to block the democratic process. If you don't like the bill we sent you, change it. Offer amendments. Let democracy work."

**Nathan Gonzalez of Inside Elections** (formerly the Rothenberg/Gonzalez Report), observes that "some movement conservative groups are not satisfied with the three members mentioned and are searching for an alternative candidate." That would be Delph, who could use the push by Gov. Holcomb and General Assembly leadership for a 10-cent-a-gallon gasoline hike as motivation to rally the movement conservative base.

Delph called it "somewhat mind-numbing" that a tax increase plan is coming from the Republican Party. "When I worked on Capitol Hill, it would have been blasphemous to suggest a tax increase," said Delph, a former aide to U.S. Rep. Burton. "You would have been run out of the party. It's like we have landed in a Rod Serling episode of 'The Twilight Zone'."

Instead, Delph charged his fellow Republicans to "think outside of the box and exhaust every possible option" before asking more from Hoosier taxpayers. "Raising taxes isn't an outside-of-the box solution – ever," Delph said.

On the immigration front, Delph has spent much of his General Assembly career pressing illegal immigration.

As for Donnelly, he has matched fierce determination with luck. Polling in late 2011 revealed Sen. Lugar was



U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly speaking at Armistice Day ceremony at the Indiana War Memorial last year. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

poised for a general election victory, but he was in deep trouble in the primary. Mourdock had spent two years courting the growing Tea Party movement and then used Lugar's residency issue and age to burnish the notion that it was time for a new senator. March 2012 polling by the Howey Politics/DePauw University Poll showed Lugar easily defeating Donnelly in the general election 50-29%, but Donnelly and Mourdock were tied at 35%. The farther right Republican primary voters opted for change, Mourdock upset Lugar by nearly 20%, then

had a disastrous month after the primary when he failed to coalesce the moderate wing of the GOP. He and Donnelly ran a race within the margin of error until Mourdock's epic debate blunder on an abortion question, igniting a social media firestorm while sending the Democrat to a 7% plurality victory.

**It was a complicated** scenario, but Donnelly pulled it off by reading the tea leaves wisely.

Donnelly has spent the past four years relentlessly touring the state in the name of constituent service. He has shadowed trades ranging from firefighters to farmers, and gets generally good marks from Republicans. He voted for Obamacare as a member of the House in 2010 and has won a House and Senate race despite that vote. Polling shows support for Obamacare surging nationally, though not likely as much in Indiana. If Trump and congressional Republicans bungle the "replace" element following the inevitable repeal, Donnelly could benefit. Donnelly has not hesitated to part with President Obama on issues like the EPA's Clean Power Plan.

Gonzalez of Inside Elections rates a general election race a "tossup," though without knowing who the GOP nominee will be, how bloodied he or she might exit a primary race, and whether President Trump has delivered on enough campaign pledges to keep his movement alive, or whether he becomes a mid-term millstone, has the potential to give this political deck several wildcards and jokers.

**Gonzalez, in making the case** for a general election "tossup" observes, "Donnelly is regarded as an affable senator with less baggage than (Evan) Bayh and he may end up with some key moderate credentials. But he is still a Democrat running for reelection in a state that took a decided turn toward Trump."

Howey Politics Indiana will wait for the Republican primary field to solidify and monitor the Trump performance before we weigh in with a race rating. ❖

# Mayors are strong, but have little state clout

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana mayors have little power to go with their great responsibilities. They are largely invisible outside their own communities. They are not weak people, but collectively have little statewide clout.

A year ago, I set out to interview former Indiana mayors about their experiences. Former mayors who held office in the past 30 years, with “no skin in the game,” I expected to be blunt and objective, knowing they were speaking off the record. Each interview with 18 former mayors was a learning experience for me. First, I learned I was a bad interviewer. I did not draw out my subjects, did not direct them to the issues I wanted to cover, but let them flow on issues they chose.

Second, I discovered what conscientious, generous people we elect as mayors. These are our neighbors who want to accomplish good things for their constituents, for their communities.

Third, mayors know the barriers they face. But those impediments, mainly creations of the General Assembly, are taken as given and worked with or worked around. There are no televised marches on the Capitol. Their representation in the Statehouse (the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns, IACT) takes an “incremental” approach to rectifying the wrongs done to our local governments.

**Fourth**, political party is of little consequence to mayors. As several said, “Garbage and snow are neither Democrat nor Republican.” Yet, politics and partisanship are critical to many city councilors and workers.

**Fifth**, most mayors did not talk of meaningful contact with their home legislators. Mayors are largely ignored by the su-

perior personages in the General Assembly. Even though a few mayors “graduate” to the legislature, their focus shifts from “operations” to “policy.”

These were, to me, critical findings. I perceive a crisis at the municipal level throughout the state. Local revenues, once mainly property taxes, have been under attack for more than 40 years. What’s wrong with local property taxes? Why are income and sales taxes, controlled by the distant legislature, better? Why do we have an amendment to the Indiana Constitution putting a cap on local property taxes?

**Farmers and homeowners** (many of whom believe they are farmers because they own a riding mower) oppose property taxes. Likewise, equipment- and inventory-rich businesses got rid of the inventory tax and now pressure legislators to eliminate the personal property (equipment) tax.

Our flat rate state income tax and sales tax hit households. Localities were bullied into adopting local income taxes, but there was no outrage expressed in my interviews.

Mayors know they cannot fight legislators who hold the purse strings. They must bow and wait to be kicked again while bending over.

Thus, I confess my failure in still another research activity. This column constitutes my report. From here on, I’ll stick with numbers. Talking to people, however delightful, is not my strength. ❖

**Mr. Marcus is an economist, writer, and speaker who may be reached at [mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com](mailto:mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com).**





# Opioid crisis priority, but where's funding?

By **THOMAS CURRY**

INDIANAPOLIS – While Statehouse leadership is focused on keeping campaign promises to end Indiana's opioid epidemic, the details of how the "annihilation of addiction" will be paid for remain unknown.

Gov. Holcomb has made ending the epidemic one of his five legislative pillars for this legislative session and has already got to work by appointing a new drug czar. Early in January, Senate leadership pledged an extensive



five-year legislative plan to tackle the issue, with an estimated 19 pieces of legislation coming this year. But in the early days of session, House and Senate budget maestros are unsure of how much the pricetag will be, or how they will pay for it.

Sen. Jim Merritt has carried the banner for the drug epidemic issue in the Senate. His plan, carried out through the aforementioned five-year attack on drugs, calls for improving the state's ability to collect and understand data on the issue. "If you are going to attack an enormous problem," Merritt told HPI, "you have to have information to understand and assess the situation you are in. If I can find out how many prescriptions there are, for example, that can help find a way to put more guidelines on doctors."

Merritt's plan, if passed, will manifest as pilot programs to help the most affected by the crisis. One of these programs is setting up a care facility for 25 addicted pregnant women in southern Indiana. Another, for which the details remain to be worked out, would set up a program to allow 40 women a year to receive hospital care for their addiction.

**While the programs may** initially treat low numbers, Merritt said, "You can see on the grand scale of things, there isn't a whole lot of people that we are taking care of, but pilots are demonstration projects that we learn from."

However, in a tight budget year, when political capital and significant taxpayer dollars are being pledged to the ambitious infrastructure plan, Merritt's ideas may not be carried out in full. Merritt optimistically estimated that \$5 million a year for his plans would be possible, and believes it to be an investment: "We have to do it."

Asked if the details had been worked out on where exactly the money would be coming from, Sen. Merritt said

that discussion will take place "after I get done with the plans." In the meantime, Merritt has reached out to those who control the budget in the House to test the waters there.

House Ways and Means Chairman Tim Brown told HPI that he's spoken with Merritt about his plan. Brown cautioned that specifics on funding Merritt's bill "is something we have to work out in April" and that Brown "hasn't put a price tag on it yet."

**More money to fight opioid** addiction will be needed if House Bill 1006, authored by Rep. Cindy Kirchofer, passes. Similar to the Senate's plans, HB 1006 focuses on the mental health aspect of addiction. The bill calls for allowing mental health and addiction forensic treatment services to be provided for people charged with misdemeanors if a judge recommends treatment.

Chairman Brown shared his concerns that it's hard to predict what the cost will be of HB 1006, due to not knowing how many drug convictions occur. He added, "I don't think we will be able to fund it for every misdemeanor over the next two years." Brown said that the goal is to find a way to pay for it in the state's existing budget, but cutting from other areas is certainly a possibility.

Even though it remains uncertain how the budget will shape up for Indiana's drug plan, Sen. Merritt is confident that at least some work on the issue will come out of the legislation this cycle. "I think people understand how serious this problem is and care about it," the Indianapolis Republican said. "This is only the first year in five of my plan. That means we have two budget sessions to work this out." ❖

## Syringe bill passes panel, Hill opposes

New governor Eric Holcomb has promised to make it easier for counties to establish a syringe exchange program and a bill moving through the legislature would make that possible (Costello, Indiana Public Media). A House committee Wednesday voted 11-1 in support of HB 1438, which would allow counties or municipalities to establish a syringe exchange without getting permission from the State Health department first. Existing law requires the state to declare a public health emergency before needle exchange programs can operate. State Health Commissioner Jerome Adams says the declarations are no longer necessary.

New Republican Attorney General Curtis Hill testified against the proposal, saying he believes statewide oversight is necessary. But newly-appointed Executive Director for Drug Prevention, Treatment and Enforcement Jim McClelland and Indiana State Health Commissioner Jerome Adams testified with strong support for the proposal. Hill expressed concern that needle exchanges might become distribution centers, but Adams says in Scott County, 96 percent of needles have been returned. Scott is among nine counties that have state approval for needle exchanges. ❖

# Lake GOP seeks to eliminate precincts

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – It’s not too often that Lake County Republicans gain the upper hand on the county’s Democrats. In fact, Republicans haven’t won a countywide election for more than 60 years, except for Hank Adams’ victory for county assessor a decade ago.



It was, however, hard to call that a Republican victory in that many county Democrats were vocal supporters of Adams because of legal problems plaguing Carole Ann Seaton, the Democratic nominee. Adams is deceased and Democrat Jerome

Prince, a rising star in party politics, is the assessor.

But, back to the GOP, who have Democrats over a barrel. Republicans four years ago had Democrats reeling when the Legislature approved a bill ordering the elimination of all Lake County precincts with fewer than 600 registered voters. Democrats as a stalling tactic took the matter to court. It worked as the legislation expired.

**Republicans are back** and Hal Slager, R-Schererville, has again introduced the same legislation. So, county Democrats again are on the hook to eliminate all precincts with fewer than 600 voters. Such a move would

mean the elimination of almost half of the county’s 523 precincts.

That kind of reduction would decimate the Gary precinct organization that has seen its population plummet from a high of about 175,000 to fewer than 80,000 today. Yet, Gary has maintained almost the same number of precincts and has about 140 today. Gary has about 27 percent of the county’s precincts but just 16 percent of the population.

**Under the Republican** consolidation plan, Hammond and East Chicago, the county’s other urban cities, would also lose precincts. Standing to gain the greatest number of precincts are Crown Point, St. John, Merrillville (which absorbed most of Gary’s population loss), Schererville, and Hobart and points south.

A Democratic organization with fewer precincts in Gary, Hammond and East Chicago would be much weaker and play into the hands of Republicans who have difficulty finding committeemen for precincts in the urban part of the county. One might call it a first step toward Republicans gaining prominence.

Lake Democrats this time are conceding that there is little they can do. Democrats have started negotiations with Republican county Chairman Dan Dernulc in an effort to ward off the legislation. Gary, Hammond and East Chicago apparently will no longer have the upper hand in filling vacancies in county offices. That power will be widespread in the future. ❖

**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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**Don Surber, American Spectator:** President Trump's magnificent inauguration speech should stand the test of time, as will his presidency. Short, sweet, and to the point, President Trump made it about the people who elected him, as well as the people who did not. Standing on the steps of the Capitol, he spoke to the rafters. And when you are outdoors, the rafters are Heaven Above. He began powerfully. Today's ceremony, however, has very special meaning because today, we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another or from one party to another, but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C., and giving it back to you, the people. That was an excellent statement a new CEO should make to his new bosses, his shareholders. And that is what we are. We, the people, own America. President Trump said "I" three times, "we" 45 times. He explained why he ran: "For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories. Their triumphs have not been your triumphs. And while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land. He then made this promise: That all changes starting right here and right now because this moment is your moment, it belongs to you."

**Francis Fukuyama, Politico:** As an American citizen, I have been rather appalled, like many others, at the rise of Donald Trump. I find it hard to imagine a personality less suited by temperament and background to be the leader of the world's foremost democracy. On the other hand, as a political scientist, I am looking ahead to his presidency with great interest, since it will be a fascinating test of how strong American institutions are. Americans believe deeply in the legitimacy of their constitutional system, in large measure because its checks and balances were designed to provide safeguards against tyranny and the excessive concentration of executive power. But that system in many ways has never been challenged by a leader who sets out to undermine its existing norms and rules. So we are embarked in a great natural experiment that will show whether the United States is a nation of laws or a nation of men. President Trump differs from almost every single one of his 43 predecessors in a variety of important ways. His business career has shown a single-minded determination to maximize his own self-interest and to get around inconvenient rules whenever they stood in his way, for example by forcing contractors to sue him in order to be paid. He was elected on the basis of a classic populist campaign, mobilizing a passionate core of largely working-class voters who believe—of-

ten quite rightly—that the system has not been working for them. He has attacked the entire elite in Washington, including his own party, as being part of a corrupt cabal that he hopes to unseat. He has already violated countless informal norms concerning presidential decorum, including overt and egregious lying, and has sought to undermine the legitimacy of any number of established institutions, from the intelligence community (which he compared to Nazis) to the Federal Reserve (which he accused of trying to elect Hillary Clinton) to the American system of electoral administration (which he said was rigged, until he won). ❖

**Doug Ross, NWI Times:** The last time I talked with Dan Coats, we laughed about the camel that ran away from the circus in Hammond. "The reason they couldn't find it is because it was wearing camelflage," I joked. Now Coats is set to become the head camel poking the nation's nose under foreign tents. Coats still has to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate, from which he just came a week ago, to be the Trump administration's director of intelligence.

Coats is a good choice. He's got plenty of government experience, both in Congress and as ambassador to Germany. Just as important, Coats won't be a yes man for President-elect Donald Trump. We talked at length, in a one-on-one conversation last October, about U.S. relations with Russia, one of the top issues that will face the Trump administration. "Everybody underestimated, and they shouldn't have, Vladimir Putin," Coats said. "He's been two or three moves ahead of us on everything. It is stunning that we have allowed Russia to be the dominating outside power controlling events in the Middle East." ❖

**Matt Yglesias, vox:** Every administration has, from time to time, sought to mislead the public about something or other. But Donald Trump's administration already stands out for the frequency of misleading statements, their baldfacedness, and the at times absurd content. One popular interpretation is that this is happening because Trump has, in fact, lost his marbles and simply can't stand the blow to his ego implied by mocking media coverage. But George Mason University economist Tyler Cowen has another theory that casts Trump's behavior as more strategic. He may be wrong, but it's worth considering — especially if you're someone who doesn't like Trump and thus may be instinctively prone to underestimating him. In Cowen's view, the key issues are trust and loyalty. By having subordinates tell lies on his behalf, Trump accomplishes two things: One is that it's a test — "if you want to ascertain if someone is truly loyal to you, ask them to do something outrageous or stupid." The other is that it's a rite of passage — "by requiring subordinates to speak untruths, a leader can undercut their independent standing, including their standing with the public, with the media and with other members of the administration." ❖



## Shakeup at State GOP

INDIANAPOLIS — There has been a staff shakeup at the Indiana Republican Party as the regime of Jeff Cardwell passes to incoming chairman Kyle Hupfer, who is expected to be elected next Wednesday. Multiple Republican sources tell Howey Politics Indiana that Dave Buskill is out as executive director, being replaced by Matt Huckleby, who served as political director for Mike Pence for Indiana, which was the vice president's gubernatorial reelection committee. Mark Warner is out as political director, Stephanie Beckley as the party's data director, and Kristen Williams as communications director. Williams has been hired by Attorney General Curtis Hill. Warner said the process "wasn't malicious," saying, "There are no elections in 2017. It wasn't like you're not being retained." He added, "When a new chairman comes in, these changes happen. Tim Berry had his people, Eric Holcomb brought in his people and so did Jeff Cardwell." Hupfer was co-chair of Gov. Eric Holcomb's transition committee and was selected by the new governor as party chair in late December. Sources tell HPI that Pete Seat will become communications director. He held a similar position in the Gov. Holcomb's 2016 campaign. Seat told HPI Wednesday morning, "There won't be any comments related to state party until after a new chairman is elected next Wednesday."

## Gas tax hike bill passes House panel

INDIANAPOLIS — The House Republican road funding plan that increases fuel taxes, vehicle registration fees and opens the door to widespread highway tolling is on the move (Carden, NWI Times). By an 8-5 margin, the House Roads and



Transportation Committee voted Wednesday to approve House Bill 1002, sponsored by state Rep. Ed Soliday, R-Valparaiso, and send it to the Ways and Means Committee for further review of its financial impact. Under the plan, the state's gasoline tax would increase on July 1 by 10 cents - totaling 28 cents per gallon - to restore the buying power lost to inflation since the tax last was raised in 2003. Similarly, the state tax on diesel and other motor vehicle fuels would go up 10 cents per gallon, and all fuel taxes automatically would annually adjust by up to 1 cent per gallon based on inflation and Indiana personal income changes. In addition, all revenue from the state's 7 percent sales tax on gasoline, one-seventh of which currently is allocated for roads, would be used entirely for infrastructure starting in 2021. Motorists also would pay an extra \$15 registration fee on every vehicle with an Indiana license plate to support local road projects on top of the 47 percent share of state fuel tax revenue that currently goes to local governments for roads.

## Trump's wall could cost \$20 billion

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's border wall could cost \$20 billion, and his directive to crack down on border security could increase federal government spending by \$13 billion a year (Politico). It's not clear where he's going to get the money. Trump said Wednesday, without elaborating, that his plan would "save billions and billions of dollars." But it's likely he'll need Congress to agree to a massive spending increase. His plan could cost more than the entire 2016 combined budgets for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection, which ran to \$19.4 billion. John Sandweg, who was acting director of ICE in 2013 and 2014, told POLITICO that the cost and logistics of parts of Trump's executive orders are infeasible. "I just

view this as a political document more than anything," Sandweg said of the orders.

## Crouch rounds out her team

INDIANAPOLIS — Since taking office on Jan. 9, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch has made several appointments to her executive team (Terre Haute Tribune-Star). Assisting with the day-to-day operations and strategic planning of the Office of the Lt. Governor are: Tracy Barnes, chief of staff; Mark Wuellner, deputy chief of staff; Ryan Heater, policy and legislative director; Marie Davis, director of communications strategy; Maureen Hayden, director of intergovernmental affairs; Jim Morrison, director of veteran opportunity; Ethan Lawson, Director of Advanced Scheduling; and, John Roeder, special assistant to the Lt. Governor.

## Pay raise bill turns into study panel

INDIANAPOLIS — A controversial proposal to give elected officials in Indiana a pay raise was killed Wednesday (Associated Press). Sen. Randy Head is the author of Senate Bill 60. He says he will change the bill to remove the pay raise provision and instead sending that issue to a study committee to take a closer look at how the salaries of our state's elected officials compare with other states.

## Donnelly an NRA target on Sessions

INDIANAPOLIS — The powerful National Rifle Association is jumping into the confirmation fight over Attorney General nominee Jeff Sessions, airing new TV ads promoting Sessions as an ally of police and friend of gun owners - and putting pressure on a handful of Democratic senators up for reelection in gun-friendly red states next year - including Indiana's Sen. Joe Donnelly (Politico).