



Trump, Pence, GOP whiff on health deal

Seven years of vows to dismantle Obamacare end with a discordant thud

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

KOKOMO – For seven years, Hoosier Republicans railed against Obamacare. Poll after poll showed it deeply unpopular here. It drew spiteful reaction from Govs. Mitch Daniels, Mike Pence and Eric Holcomb. The Indiana delegation marched lockstep through some 60 votes in the House to repeal the ACA, all doomed under President Barack Obama.

Then came Nov. 8, 2016, when the planets aligned, Donald Trump and Mike Pence forged one of the greatest upsets in presidential history, and both chambers in Congress went majority Republican. Obamacare was destined for the dustbin of history.

On May 5, 2016, all Hoosier House Republicans voted for the American Health Care Act, which passed by a single vote. There was a Rose Garden beer party with President Trump as they all smiled, brimming over \$880 billion in Medicaid cuts that would have booted 22 million Americans from health coverage, including about 50,000



Hoosiers in each congressional district. For the first time in modern history, a political party under a non-ideological president merely seeking a deal for a win, were attempting to roll back an entitlement.

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Single payer is coming

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – Single payer health care is on its way, as inevitable as the rising sun. Through the cumulative effects of Democratic scheming, Republican incompetence and the ignorance of the American people, we stand on the brink of the final dismemberment of the greatest health care system in the world. Soon we will enter a world of rationed medical care, medical treatment by committee and true equality of health care, where the only equality of care will be that no one will receive quality care.

Call me a pessimist, but I have seen this train wreck coming for several years, at least



“I think that’s a violation. I can’t answer that question because I don’t think it’s going to happen.”

- President Trump to the New York Times on whether he’d fire special counsel Robert Mueller if the probe went beyond Russian collusion, and into his finances.



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since 1993. Since that time, health care has become an effective wedge issue for both political parties. Much as the issue of abortion has been used for political purposes since Roe v. Wade, access to universal affordable health care has become the football of choice for the game of divide and conquer played by Republicans and Democrats alike.

Although the issue of socialized medicine dates back many decades, its latest incarnation began in earnest with the creation of the Clinton Health Care Task Force, in 1993. After campaigning for the need for universal health care during the 1992 presidential election, newly elected President Bill Clinton acted quickly in January, 1993, to appoint his wife Hillary to chair a task force to design a plan for universal care. Conservatives, Libertarians and the health care industry banded together to launch an all-out attack on Clinton's plan.

You may remember the delightful bit of political advocacy advertising featuring "Harry and Louise." Their heartfelt discussions over the breakfast table effectively scuttled universal care and sent Democrats in Congress scrambling to save their own necks. The Clinton plan fell apart as fellow Democrats offered competing plans and the original task force plan died of a thousand cuts.

Republicans rode a wave of anger into control of the House of Representatives, and newly minted Speaker Newt Gingrich had no plans to offer a Republican plan for health care. This is where the issue rested until 2009. With a new ultra-liberal president and control of both houses of Congress, including a death grip of 60 votes in the Senate, Democrats spent every last dime of political capital they had and rammed the Affordable Care Act down the throats of Republicans, the health care industry and the American people.



Almost from its inception, conceived in the back rooms of Congress and the hallowed halls of liberal academia, the ACA, or Obamacare, generated massive confusion and unanswerable questions from those who actually did read the legislation. Forced participation in health care through government-mandated purchases, numerous and massive new taxes, murky service issues and onerous compliance regulations all quickly turned a Republican defeat into a money-raising and vote-getting blessing.

Beating a steady and never-ending drumbeat of "repeal and replace," Republicans rode to huge victories in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016 in elections for the House and Senate. The massive problems of Obamacare coupled with astronomical policy cost increases have helped to firmly entrench Republicans in Congress and in statehouses across the United States, as voters thoroughly repudiated the failing plan.

The Republican-led House of Representatives voted on over 50 occasions to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Each time, either Senate inaction or the threat of an Obama veto made the gesture futile. However, each failure was met with great success on the fundraising front, as disgruntled conservatives and health-care-related leaders flooded Republican coffers with tons of cash, all given for the promise of repeal upon ballot box success.

In 2012, I began to smell a rat in the health care debacle. Each new revelation of some disaster or crippling detail of the Affordable Care Act made me wonder, at first, how Democrats could have designed such an ill-thought out piece of legislation. Virtually every detail was so bad that the legislation did not appear to have had any input from anyone with greater than a GED equivalency.

Don't get me wrong. I've never been too impressed with the

intellectual lights of the Democrat Party, particularly those in Congress, but there just had to be some Democrats who could do simple math with a calculator and could see that Obamacare would eventually drop off a cliff.

That's when it dawned on me. Was the hastily passed Affordable Care Act intentionally loaded with enough poison pills that its eventual failure was virtually guaranteed? After 10 or 20 years of everyone receiving health care, would a future Republican Congress actually have the political nerve to scrap it altogether?

One evening, in the spring of 2012, I was dining with a very senior Republican official and I asked, "Is there any way to prevent an eventual single payer health care system?" His answer was quick and short, "I don't think so!"

In 2017, Republicans were surprisingly given one last chance to repeal and replace Obamacare. We should have been concerned that over time, the Republican mantra had changed from "repeal Obamacare" to "repeal and replace." A full-court press in the liberal media had touted for several years the wonders wrought by Obamacare. Heartwarming stories about recent college graduates still having insurance coverage through mom and dad's plan, about individuals with pre-existing conditions miraculously saved by Obamacare, and about the many millions of new people receiving insurance coverage for the first time in their lives, all served to weaken knees and resolve of Republicans in Congress.

In January, with majorities in both the House and the Senate and a surprising new occupant, not named Hillary, in the White House, it appeared to an apoplectic liberal establishment and a hopeful conservative establishment that Obamacare was on the way out the door. But this is where the picture gets cloudy and confusing. Armed with the power and the votes to either return life and the health care industry back to the way it was, or to tinker with Obamacare and kill some of its more onerous details, Congress balked. The House splintered into several caucuses that forced a sickeningly compromised piece of legislation to be passed. The Senate, with its myriad fiefdoms and ridiculous adherence to inflexible rules, just scrapped



the House bill and worked on its own.

By the time the Congressional sausage mill gets finished with health care overhaul, if indeed it ever does, we will have a bill that is so severely compromised that it too will merely hasten the inevitable slide to single payer health care.

I believe that faced with a collapsing health care system, a severe shortage of medical personnel, skyrocketing individual costs for those not being subsidized and a complete lack of insurance companies willing to serve the market, the only decision that will be politically palatable to the American people will be a system that works like Medicare. Forget the fact that Medicare itself is going bankrupt. The idea of handing a card to your doctor and having the government take care of all of your health care needs will be terribly appealing to the vast majority of Americans. Who cares who will ultimately bear the cost of such an enormous program?

There will be only three ways to pay for a single payer health care system: Large co-pays by the insured, breathtaking tax increases, or by a further expansion of the national debt. I'll put my money on a combination of tax-and-spend and greatly accelerated deficit spending.

The dysfunctional nature of our federal government at all levels will get worse before it gets better. The bitter fighting between political parties and inside the Republican Party will virtually guarantee that no effective solution to the Democrat-created health care crisis will ever be passed.

Yes, single payer health care is on its way. It's coming as the result of a failure by our government, and sadly, as a result of my own political party. Now I know what Nancy Pelosi really meant when she said that we had to pass the legislation to know what was in it. The ultimate Trojan horse! ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican Chairman

GOP health demise, from page 1

Polls showed a mere 17% supporting RyanCare or TrumpCare. And, amazingly, in national polls Obamacare actually became more popular with a majority.

On Friday and Saturday, at the National Governors Association (sans Gov. Holcomb), the Trump administration put on its final press, with Vice President Pence, CMS Director Seema Verma, and Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price on point in Providence. It would be

the first of a disaster trifecta this past week.

The Washington Post reported it this way: "With Trump engulfed in the fallout from investigations of Russian interference in the 2016 campaign, Pence became the Trump administration's main advocate for the legislation. He went to Senate lunch after Senate lunch, and eventually to the governors' meeting. But Pence, like the bill, never caught on. While Pence has clout with conservatives nationally, he drew blank stares from those in front of him in Rhode Island, despite being a former Indiana governor.

When he targeted Ohio Gov. John Kasich, who opposed the bill, he sparked outrage for appearing to incorrectly link waiting times for disabled people in Ohio to the expansion of Medicaid."

The Pence performance in Rhode Island was called "atrocious." Connecticut Gov. Dan Malloy, a long-time Pence nemesis, noted that during a Saturday breakfast session, Pence and the Trump team sought out governors, simultaneously discrediting the Congressional Budget Office while others used CBO data to support their cause. "It was heavy handed. It was ham-handed," Malloy said.

Then came Monday night when Trump and Pence dined at the White House with a group of Republican senators. Trump complained about the grind of forging health reforms, a continuation of his naive statement last winter, "No one knew how complicated" health reform could be. It was the capstone of his advocacy that included no major addresses or rallies as President Obama had done in 2009 and 2010. Instead, he resorted to Twitter to defend his scandal-mired clan. He told Senate Republicans that the House bill was "mean," creating an "I'll-throw-you-under-the-bus" mentality. His minions from the Pence sphere – Nick Ayres and Marty Obst – targeted Sens. Dean Heller and Jeff Flake, creating a pervading sense of unease, anger and distrust in the Senate.

And Trump blasted conservative icon U.S. Sen. Rand Paul. Politico quoted a dinner attendee, "He basically said, 'If we don't do this, we're in trouble. That we have the Senate, House and White House and we have to do it or we're going to look terrible.'"

Two deep red state senators who weren't there, Mike Lee of Utah and Jerry Moran of Kansas, were simultaneously writing press releases becoming the third and fourth Republicans to bail, effectively killing the deal. Trump had no idea the statements were coming, according to White House and congressional sources. His top aides were taken aback. "I was very surprised when the two folks came out last night," Trump told reporters Tuesday. "We thought they were in fairly good shape."

Trump has been all over the map: On Monday he tweeted: "Republicans should just REPEAL failing ObamaCare now & work on a new Healthcare Plan that will start from a clean slate." On Tuesday: "As I have always said, let ObamaCare fail and then come together and do a great healthcare plan. Stay tuned!" On Wednesday: "We can repeal it, but we should repeal it and replace."

"Right now, nobody's afraid of Trump, and that's a real problem," Rob Jesmer, the former executive director of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, told

the New York Times. "But the truth is that he hasn't really tried."

Another exploding cigar

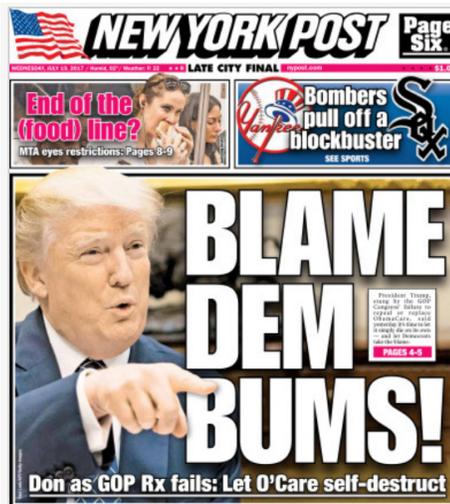
It was yet another exploding cigar that continues to dog Vice President Pence, who on Saturday took his "let me be clear" stance that is often followed by fallacy: "We're on the verge of a historic accomplishment here in our nation's capital. Because in the coming days, President Trump, working with the Congress that you helped elect, is going to keep our promise to the American people, and we are going to repeal and replace Obamacare."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell found a different reality, saying on Monday, "Regretfully, it is now apparent that the effort to repeal and immediately replace the failure of Obamacare will not be successful." He suggested a straight repeal vote, which Mike Allen of Axios calls the "nuclear option" and adds, "All the moderates are squeamish about the current bill. Full repeal is way worse. It's a horrendous situation for the moderates."

Take U.S. Sen. Todd Young, for instance, who was still undecided, the only Hoosier Republican in Congress not to follow lockstep and support the tortured House and Senate bills. The National Governors Association received a study from Avalere Health, which found Indiana's federal Medicaid funds would decline by \$36.5 billion by 2036 under the now-deceased GOP plan. The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette reports today that Indiana would lose \$4.9 billion in funding for the poor, disabled and elderly on Medicaid under the flailing Senate health care bill, a 14% drop from what the state would receive under current law through 2026. The estimates come from a governors-only discussion on the future of health care that was presented last week at the NGA and obtained by The Journal Gazette. The federal funding reductions would grow even more severe under the Senate plan by 2036 with Indiana's loss at 32%, or \$36.5 billion.

And the Wall Street Journal reports today that the Senate Republican push to repeal the Affordable Care Act would cause 32 million more people to be without insurance coverage by 2026 and decrease the federal deficit by \$473 billion, according to a new CBO report released Wednesday. The estimate also projects that repealing the ACA would double premium increases by 2026.

U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly said Wednesday, "Today's non-partisan CBO report confirms that repealing the existing health care law would be utterly devastating for Hoosiers. Premiums would double, protections for people with pre-existing conditions would be eliminated, and Indiana's successful HIP 2.0 would end. This is not a political game, it's about the health and financial well-being of millions of Hoosiers and Americans. I continue to stand ready to work with my Senate colleagues to strengthen our health care



system.”

So Monday night, the political masturbation of the Republican Party, attempting to forge social reengineering on a straight party-line vote, collapsed. A vow to simply repeal Obamacare, with Trump and Pence fanning those flames, died the next day.

U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey stated the obvious on ABC’s This Week Sunday, saying, “I didn’t expect Donald Trump to win. I think most of my colleagues didn’t. So we didn’t expect to be in this situation. Given how difficult it is to get to a consensus, it was hard to force that until there was a need to. That’s what we’ve been working on.”

The opposition party, placed in power by a populist surge of voters who wanted Trump, master of the art of the deal, ended up as the paper elephant which did not know how to govern, pull its weight or create clout. It in itself is polarized between the radical conservatives and pragmatic moderates like Gov. Holcomb who have learned that Medicaid – or Healthy Indiana Plan 2.0 – is now intertwined into the social fabric. Holcomb and Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma and Senate President David Long were so cognizant of the need for Medicaid, the value of HIP 2.0 and the inertia in Washington that they inserted language into HEA1, the Next Level road funding bill, to divert funds to potentially prop up HIP 2.0.

The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette’s Niki Kelly reported that state legislators created the Special Transportation Flexibility Fund to cover needs for health care, education and child services if necessary. The fund will retain money starting in 2020 from the state sales tax on gasoline purchases that the governor can use for those needs “if the governor feels federal or state funding is insufficient to support those programs.”

“Health care was certainly one of the things we were concerned about. There are a lot of unknowns with the replacement of Obamacare,” said Long. “No matter how you slice it, it’s pretty clear the federal government was never going to be able to keep their deal with the states.”

Damon Linker, writing for The Week, observed, “This seems like a good time to reflect on just how comprehensively incompetent the Republican Party is. The GOP controls both houses of Congress. It holds the White House. For seven years its leadership railed against ObamaCare, and its rank-and-file members voted to repeal it, over and over again. Yet here we are, six months into the Trump administration, and what has the party managed to deliver? Nada. Zilch. Zero. This whole sorry spectacle has nothing to do with the strength of liberalism in general or Obamacare in particular. It’s a product of one thing and one thing only, the complete political ineffectiveness of the contemporary Republican Party. Yes, the GOP can win elections, thanks to gerrymandering and the formi-

dable deployment of weaponized negative partisanship. That makes it a powerful party of opposition. But when it comes to actually doing something, the GOP’s got nothing.”

Time for bipartisanship

Both Sens. Young and Donnelly had paid at least lip service to the idea of a bipartisan coalition to forge an evolution of health policy. Donnelly said on Wednesday, “The proposed Senate health care bill would have been disastrous for Hoosiers. The latest plan to repeal without any replacement is downright reckless, playing politics with the health and economic well-being of millions of American families. It is time to do the hard work of forging a bipartisan bill to strengthen our current health-care system, so that we can reduce costs for Hoosier families, continue to protect people with pre-existing conditions, and preserve the good work states like Indiana have done to expand affordable health care. The American people are counting on us to take a thoughtful approach together, and I urge the Senate to take this path in the coming days.”



Governors gear up

In the wake of the Senate disaster, a group of former governors in the Senate that included both Republicans and Democrats began forging a new coalition.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich observed, “Washington’s approach to health care over the past decade is yet another example of our lawmakers’ increasing distance from the rest of America. First one party rams through a rigid, convoluted plan that drives up costs through unsustainable mechanisms that are now unraveling. Then the other party pursues fixes that go too far the other way, and again ignores ideas from the other side. Neither extreme is cutting it, and the quick opposition that doomed the Senate plan reflects how unacceptable its ideas are to so many.”

Kasich added, “After two failed attempts at reform, the next step is clear: Congress should first focus on fixing the Obamacare exchanges before it takes on Medicaid. If we want to move Americans off Medicaid, there must be somewhere stable for them to go. For all its faults, at least Medicaid is currently a stable system for those who need it. The exchanges are anything but, and need immediate improvements. The best next step is for members of both parties to ignore the fear of criticism that can come from reaching across the aisle and put pencil to pad on these and other ideas that repair health care in real, sustainable ways.”

On MSNBC’s Morning Joe, Kasich and host Joe Scarborough suggested an idea Purdue President Mitch Daniels proposed back in 2010 before CPAC: Comprehen-

sive entitlement reform that would include Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security. Noting that entitlements represent 80% of the U.S. debt and will continue to grow, stifling growth, Kasich said, "We have to reform entitlements but you have to do that with Democrats."

"Trump is best with his populism," Kasich said. He runs into trouble with Pence-infused ideology. "Republicans looked over the cliff and pulled back."

Conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt added, "Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Paul D. Ryan face a very difficult choice as they survey the smoking ruins of their 'unified GOP government' after nearly six months in office. They and their lieutenants could decide to pivot from health care to racking up small victories and awaiting reinforcements from the 2018 elections. Or they could go for a big deal with Democrats. It's a tough choice for Ryan and McConnell, but I'm hoping they opt for the latter."

Hewitt added, "Ryan is in more dangerous terrain, as every member of his caucus 'owns' the failure to repeal and replace – especially the Freedom Caucus, which threw the process into disarray only to retreat (too late) with a fig leaf – and as a result the carnage of the collapsing



Obamacare experiment. Real people with real illnesses and deeply flawed Medicaid insurance will discover in increasing numbers that paper insurance doesn't deliver real health care when their children are sick. A 'watch it fail' approach to Obamacare, when the crisis is real and the consequences for poor children are so enormous, is not just bad politics; it is also immoral."

A move toward a bipartisan approach is perilous territory for Vice President Pence.

He and his team, including legislative liaison Marc Short, didn't have the mojo to pull off the Republican-only victory. During his 12 years in Congress, he leaves virtually no footprints in working with Democrats. He never passed a bill and never forged a major bill authored with a Democrat. The man Trump picked because he "knows Congress" is poised to be the straw man moving forward.

Republican political operative Mike Murphy described on Morning Joe Wednesday that health care policy is a "pain smorgasbord" for presidents. It has wreaked political disaster at this, Trump's sixth month in office. He faces heavy lifts on the debt ceiling and budget as he tweets away indiscriminately. One-eighth of his presidency has been squandered, this Congress has been the least effective in the last 160 years, and the Russian collusion scandal circles overhead like ominous vultures. ❖

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Why Mike Pence ain't talkin'

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – It's been a year and five days since Mike Pence bolted from a tortured gubernatorial reelection bid in Indiana and ascended to the national stage as Donald Trump's running mate. It was an epic roll of the political dice that has now positioned himself for the presidency.



We know that after Trump and key operatives like Jared Kushner signaled Pence as the veep selection, Trump wavered, leaving Pence on a limb for about 24 hours before he tweeted out the confirmation on July 15, 2016. Hours later Gov. Pence withdrew from the Indiana ticket with just minutes to spare.

We don't know much about what was going through the governor's mind during this

sequence because Pence ignores the Indiana media. He kept the Indiana Republican National Convention delegation at arm's length, didn't appear at the delegation hotel, and made a 20-minute appearance at a country club the day of his acceptance speech in a Cleveland suburb.

While Pence has been back to Indiana for several fundraisers during the presidential campaign and lately for his new leadership PAC, almost all Hoosier press accounts feature a line like this: "The Pence campaign did not return phone calls." Or the "vice president and his spokesman declined comment."

The easy comparison is with Vice President Dan Quayle, who gave frequent access to Indiana media during his four years in that office. The big difference is that Quayle worked for President George H.W. Bush, and Pence

serves under President Trump.

Yuuuuuge difference.

Here's the take from a Republican insider on why Pence is out of reach: "He can't afford to be associated in any way with anything critical of Trump to any degree. There is a fair chance he could become president, but more importantly, he needs – and we need – him to be able to quietly keep the man stable. To do that, he needs to stay away from anybody not a cheerleader. And he can't be seen by Trump as a potential rival."

In recent weeks, national media has encroached on the "potential rival" aspect, with the New York Times reporting that Pence is courting high-dollar donors at his Naval Observatory residence. There has been a number of suggestions that Pence is positioning for 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., if Trump is somehow deposed via impeachment (highly unlikely until at least 2019 if Democrats retake control of Congress) or if Pence and the Trump cabinet invoke the 25th Amendment citing mental instability, which has never happened and is even more unlikely.

When the New York Times high-donor article surfaced, Pence responded with praise, calling him humble. At American University, Pence, who called the NYT donor outreach story "offensive," delivered a speech that the Washington Post described as "dripping with adulation for his boss," with Pence saying Trump "literally embodies American leadership."

Pence called "The Art of the Deal," Trump's book from 30 years ago, "actually an American classic" that "holds words of wisdom for all future leaders that are gathered here today." He told the students that "you couldn't have picked a better time to study leadership" and "at this very moment, we're seeing the bold leadership of an American president on the world stage."

"Our president, he leads by asking questions and he listens," Pence said. "And I believe that reflects the kind of humility that will enhance your ability to be a leader."

When former IndyStar reporter Mary Beth Schneider read the account in The Hill, she tweeted, "I thought



Vice President Mike Pence and former vice president Dan Quayle meet, talk and embrace during the Inauguration ceremony on Jan. 20.

this was satire. The Onion, surely. Nope."

The Republican insider comparing Pence to Quayle added, "You could have access to Quayle – bluntly said – because he was largely irrelevant and George Bush was not Donald Trump. Hostility to media was not an essential part of the Republican approach, and certainly not by Bush 41. A lot has changed. You can't use the Quayle model."

Another Trump/Pence insider told me, "Hate to be the bearer of bad news, but they have moved past Howey Politics and are on a much larger stage. In other words, I wouldn't wait by your phone. They are the president and the vice president after all."

Ouch, ouch. OUCH!

HPI has approached several Pence allies in In-



diana seeking to open up the lines of communication. The outreach was this: If they don't think they're getting a fair shake in the media, then at least maintain some type of dialogue so their angles are represented, even if it's on background.

The reaction? Nyet.

Our GOP insider notes: "Anyone who helps you . . . will be suspect by Pence and Trump because they will be labeled 'leakers or 'potential leakers.' What has

always been a problem is now exaggerated 10-fold."

So Mike Pence ain't talkin' to the folks back home.



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Preparing for war with North Korea

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

NASHVILLE, Ind. – U.S. Sen. Todd Young is a former Navy intelligence officer, an intellect in the tradition of Richard Lugar, and a pragmatist. So when he conjures the notion of a potential nuclear war, perhaps just months or weeks away, it makes one sit up straight.

The war drums are beating within the administration, with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence repeatedly saying “all options are on the table” when it comes to the rogue North Korean regime of dictator Kim Jong Un. At the G-20 summit last week, Trump promised something “pretty severe” after North Korea successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile. Trump promises a paradigm shift, and Kim keeps thumbing his nose and lobbing off missiles.

“We’re not being passive,” Young, who serves on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said mid-June. “The time for strategic patience has passed, as Sec. (Rex) Tillerson has stated. I think we needed to change course. Simply standing by and hoping Kim Jung Un will be welcomed into the community of nations is not going to work.”

Young explained, “I know contingency planning has taken place in respect to all options. The last thing we want is to have to resort to a military option. I think it’s appropriate for this administration to keep all options on the table, but here are still economic tools we can use, diplomatic tools that remain on the table. Sequentially we can tighten the thumb screws on the North Korean regime, but there aren’t many good moves left on the chess board.”

“This is an issue that in the coming months could come to a head and the American people need to understand that,” Young said.

Essentially, we have two leaders who are confronting each other and neither wants to lose face.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said on CBS Face The Nation, “A conflict in North Korea would probably be the worst kind of fighting in most people’s lifetimes. The bottom line is it would be a catastrophic war . . . if we’re not able to resolve this situation through diplomatic means.”

U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly is a Democrat who sits in the Senate Committee on Armed Services and I asked him if there’s a scenario where a preemptive U.S. strike would be a good move. “I can’t get into that,” he said with a grim face.

What do Hoosiers need to know?

“No. 1, my first obligation is the defense of this country, our citizens,” Donnelly said. “The leader of North

Korea has said he plans to put a nuclear warhead on top of an ICBM and send it here. I have to take him at his word. The subcommittee I am the ranking member of, the Strategic Forces, is . . . responsible for our missile defense. It’s responsible for nuclear warheads, nuclear weaponry, all of our submarines. This is exactly what we’re working on.”

Donnelly and Young would prefer to pressure the Chinese with “real sanctions” on their banks and companies that make missile parts for the North Koreans.

“**Secondly, on the strategic** forces side, we have to work with the Chinese, but we don’t farm out our national defense. We’re responsible for it,” Donnelly said. “I expect to see a continued understanding how important it is, that as we move forward, we have all our tools on the table. What I mean by that is nuclear submarines. North Korea knows we have attack submarines ready to go.”

This is where some of the temperament issues with President Trump come into play. Neither he, nor Vice President Pence, have served in the military.

I mentioned that Trump reportedly told Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte in a May phone call that Washington had sent two nuclear submarines off the Korean peninsula and said a “major, major conflict” was possible. “We have two submarines, the best in the world, We have two nuclear submarines, not that we want to use them at all,” Trump said.

That, in Donnelly’s assessment, was a “bad move.”

“That is classified,” Donnelly continued. “I work with these folks and the people who know where they are is about as small a group as you can possibly think of. Their families have no idea. The critical advantage they give us is, anyone thinking about taking action against us understands they are out there somewhere. No one will ever find them. Except when you tell them where they are.”

Certainly the Russians and Chinese deployed assets to locate them. Was that a serious security breach? “Yes. It was,” Donnelly responded. “It was an extraordinarily serious breach.

And what does former Sen. Richard Lugar think? Pressed by NPR’s Scott Simon, Lugar noted that the U.S. and China “do not have similar interests.” He wrote Trump, urging bilateral talks with the North Koreans, saying, “We need to make certain they know that in the event there would be an attack, it would be met appropriately and would be the end of the North Korean regime.”

In essence, for the first time in human history, a nuclear super power is seriously and operationally contemplating the preemptive elimination of another nuclear state. There could be hundreds of thousands of U.S., Korean and Japanese casualties.

It’s a chilling prospect that you need to ponder and prepare. ❖



Money, rancor flows into Senate race

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – The second quarter FEC totals are in and there is parity between U.S. Reps. Luke Messer and Todd Rokita, though the latter took away the perception that the former's uber finance team would provide a decisive advantage with a \$1 million quarter, compared to \$574,000 for Messer.

Rokita ended the halfway point with \$2.35 million cash on hand, compared to \$2.02 million for Messer. U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly reported raising \$1.3 million in the second quarter of 2017 and has nearly \$3.7 million in cash on hand, according to Federal Election Commission reports.

The Republican money wars took a back seat to the increasing rancor between the former Wabash College classmates. This played out in conspicuous fashion when Messer released a statement assailing Rokita. "For months, Todd Rokita has spread lies and half-truths about my family, claiming we are not Hoosiers and attacking my wife's legal career," Messer said. "He started by planting misleading news stories and whispering distortions in back rooms. This past weekend, he lifted the veil and directly attacked my wife and family in a television interview."

Messer added, "Todd's attacks are especially remarkable because we've known each other for 29 years. We went to Wabash College together in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Later, we served together in the Indiana Statehouse (Todd served as secretary of state, while I served as a legislator). During the last five years, we served together in Congress. What's changed? Now, Todd Rokita wants to run for the U.S. Senate, and it's clear that he will do and say almost anything to advance his political career. Apparently, truth or integrity won't get in the way. Despite his lies and attacks, Congressman Rokita knows the truth about my family."

It came in response to a Fox59 Interview on Sunday when Rokita criticized Jennifer Messer, who has made more than \$20,000 a month doing legal work for Fishers. Asked about the Jennifer Messer story, Rokita said, "The fact of the matter is the average Hoosier makes \$50,000 a year. Now that's the same when someone who's politically connected

makes that amount in 10 weeks at a part-time job, they have a right to ask questions and Hoosiers have the right to know who they are electing. The fact of the matter is Joe Donnelly will bludgeon Luke Messer with that kind of information and the fact that the same AP story put out the fact that he doesn't even live in the state. When you mentioned the interview you all did with him, he did it by satellite. I'm sitting with you here person to person. That's because Luke Messer doesn't live in the state and I do. I'm accountable to voters and taxpayers here I live amongst them every week. That's going to be used by Joe Donnelly just like it was used against Dick Lugar, just like it was used against Evan Bayh."

Messer responded, saying, "Frankly, I've known Todd a long time and very little surprises me," said Messer in an interview last month.

"I don't know what that means," said Rokita. "But I do know this: I'm going to be able to keep the race focused on Joe Donnelly because I don't have the baggage that Luke Messer does."

Greg Pence, Messer's finance chairman, told



U.S. Rep. Luke Messer and family on Capitol Hill, while the U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita and wife Kathy are shown below. For the second Republican U.S. Senate primary cycle in a row, family members have become game. In 2016, a family trip by U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman became a part of his primary showdown against now U.S. Sen. Todd Young.

Howey Politics Indiana on Wednesday, "I am disappointed we have two Republican congressmen, one is attacking the other's family and no one has announced anything yet. I think it's inappropriate. Todd Rokita has gone ahead and attacked a fellow Republican's wife. I understand once people are in primaries, but nobody's announced anything. So why is he attacking Luke Messer?"

Asked if President Ronald Reagan's 11th Commandment – "Thou shalt not criticize another Republican" – is now moot, Pence said, "All the rules have changed. I can't answer that."

Would Messer attack Rokita's family once everyone has declared entry? "He's never mentioned anything like that. I hope not," Pence said. "I hope he never goes that way."

Messer promised a campaign decision soon. "In the coming days, the Messer family will continue to pray and discuss our future," he said, with his annual family barbecue scheduled for Aug. 12. "Whatever our decision, please be assured of this: We are NOT willing to say anything and do anything to get elected."

Tim Edson, speaking for Hoosiers for Rokita, told HPI Monday evening, "Todd had nothing to do with the Associated Press reporting, and neither Todd nor the campaign has attacked Luke Messer's family. Luke Messer is pounding the table and feigning outrage in an effort to distract from an embarrassing fundraising quarter and the negative stories dogging his campaign. Even Messer's supporters are beginning to wonder whether he is even capable of defeating Joe Donnelly. It seems almost as if Messer is more concerned about protecting a lucrative contract than preparing to run for Senate. As Todd pointed out on Fox59's INFocus, the average Hoosier family makes around \$50,000 per year, so it's completely fair for the press and taxpayers to ask questions when someone politically connected pockets \$240,000 per year off taxpayers for part-time work.

"Joe Donnelly and national Democrats are going to be desperate to distract from Donnelly's record of profiting from sending jobs to Mexico and rubberstamping the Obama-Hillary-Pelosi agenda," Edson continued. "Luke Messer's Evan Bayh-like residency issues and other deep flaws are relevant and Republicans need to take them into consideration. Too much is at stake for Republicans to nominate a candidate who cannot keep the focus on Joe Donnelly and defeat him in 2018."

Indiana Democrats reveled in the GOP fratricide. "The Republican Senate primary reached new levels of aggression yesterday as the two highest profile candidates unleashed their most personal attacks yet, even though neither one has even declared for the race," said spokesman Will Baskin-Gerwitz. "There are still 10 months to go before Republicans have a nominee, but thanks to the scorched-earth tactics from Congressmen Messer and Rokita even before either has formally entered the race, it's clear that this will be the most combative, self-destructive

primary in the country. Hoosiers want a senator who will listen to them, reach across the aisle, and deliver results, not just someone who can survive a year-long mudfight."

The whisper campaign instigated by Team Rokita is that Messer is pondering reelection in the safely Republican 6th CD rather than risk a bloody primary battle with Rokita and then face a brutal mid-term election with scandal and inertia swamping the Trump White House. Edson told HPI on Wednesday, "I hear Messer is getting cold feet."

Asked if this was the strategy, Edson said, "We sort of have been. We've been pushing and hammering him. I find it fascinating that he was promising donors he was going to have a Todd Young-type quarter and would crush us. That's an even bigger problem for him. I'm not intimidated by Luke Messer's ability to out-raise



us."

Edson noted that \$341,000 of Messer's haul was PAC money, and \$165,000 is "general election money he can't even spend in the primary. Rokita has done a great job of developing his own basket of donors. You saw that this quarter with 75% of our money from individuals, and most was from Indiana."

The Rokita camp had been saying it had an \$8 million donor base due in part to his two terms running statewide for secretary of state. "If you go back and look at Todd's history, that's the kind of money he's raised because he has that network."

Hoosiers for Rokita announced its campaign finance committee composed of 60 business and community leaders. In addition to finance Chairman Dan Dumezich, the committee includes Steve Hilbert, State Sen. Erin Houchin, Byron Lamm, Forrest and Charlotte Lucas, Carol McDowell, and Bob Rohrman. "Kathy and I are thrilled to have the support of such a strong, energetic group of friends and leaders in their industries," Rokita said. "We have great support all across Indiana, we are building support across the country and our record \$1 million second

quarter demonstrates the depth of support and encouragement we've received."

"With Todd Rokita already having \$2.3 million in the bank, this team of fresh, motivated finance committee members will help Todd outwork any potential competition and raise the resources to defeat any potential challenger if he decides to enter the U.S. Senate race. No one is going to out hustle, or out raise Todd Rokita and this team if he decides to move forward," said Dumezich.

Messer Finance Committee Chairman Pence said, "I want to thank our finance committee for their hard work. We are excited that Luke continues to build all the resources he would need to run a strong campaign." Messer's deputy campaign manager for finance, Emily Daniels, said, "Our campaign is energized by the growing support from Hoosiers all across the state. We are excited to report more than \$1.5 million raised for the 2018 election cycle and over \$2 million cash on hand. Team Messer has raised more than any other member of the Indiana congressional delegation for the 2018 cycle."

Jason Kneeland, speaking for Messer, told HPI on Wednesday that the campaign had a "good quarter," and "the aggregate or combined totals in this cycle still have us ahead of Todd. Todd is out front of some of these attacks and if you know Todd, that's not completely surprising."

Kneeland acknowledged the Rokita strategy of aggressively challenging Messer in an attempt to keep him out of the race. "They've called some people and said that out loud. The reality is Todd Rokita doesn't have the juice or reality to scare anyone. If Luke gets in this deal, he will have overwhelming support financially. Any kind of idea that the half truths and deceptions are going to have any impact is a fool's errand."

As for Messer's decision, Kneeland said Messer has been focused on the current legislative agenda, including the now-defeated health care reforms and the coming budget and tax reforms. "It's been a real challenge on Capitol Hill right now, with health care and tax reform," Kneeland said. "He'd like to see some of those things get done. Everyone in the party and the American people want to get those things done. That's where his focus right now."

While Messer and Rokita spar, there are still three more potential entries: Attorney General Curtis Hill, State Rep. Mike Braun and State Sen. Mike Delph. Braun told the DuBois County Herald he will make a decision by Aug. 1. "If I am ever going to run for the United States Senate, now is the time," he said. "It could be a long time before there is a seat open again without an incumbent Republican. My children are grown and have taken on a lot of the

business and my business is in good shape."

Hill told HPI in June that while he was focused on his current job which he's been in for just six months, he would keep his options open, saying his outside establishment run might position him well with Congress so unpopular. Delph told HPI in late June that a decision could come late this summer.

GOP internals on Senate race, Trump

Some internal polling for the Messer campaign has Messer's fav/unfavs at 22/5% and Rokita 31/7%. In a primary ballot test, Rokita and Messer are tied at 23%, Hill at 4%, Braun at 2% while Terry Henderson, Mark Hurt, Andrew Takaimi are all at 1%.

The poll conducted by Wes Anderson and Kayla Dunlap for OnMedia concludes, "The primary is a jump ball. While the data suggests it's likely to be a dog fight, it also suggests that Rokita's early personal attacks on Luke Messer and his family are very likely to backfire among Indiana's primary electorate."

As for President Trump, 82% of Hoosier Republicans have a favorable opinion of him while only 15% are unfavorable. His job approval is at 83/13%. The poll of 400 likely voters was conducted July 10-12.

Donnelly has money edge, but takes a hit

While Donnelly is performing well on the finance front with \$3.7 million cash on hand, his campaign had to bat away an Associated Press story that he owned stock in Stewart Superior Corp., a business owned by his family which manufactures some products in Mexico. Donnelly quickly decided to divest, saying he hasn't had an active role in the company for 20 years, but was taking the action to avoid allowing the issue to become "a distraction from our work to end outsourcing and keep American jobs here instead of shipping them to other countries."

His campaign said he made the statement to reporters at an Indiana Black Expo luncheon. The AP reported Thursday that Donnelly made at least \$15,001 in dividends last year on as much as \$50,000 of stock in Stewart Superior Corp., which used Mexican workers to produce dye for ink pads.

Donnelly was also targeted by the National Republican Senatorial Committee which rolled out digital ads criticizing Donnelly's 2010 vote in the U.S. House for the Affordable Care Act. The ad called it the "Obamacare nightmare."

Donnelly campaign manager Peter Hanscom told HPI that despite the Stewart Superior story, they remain focused



on the money. "We're keeping our heads down and raising money. We are very proud of the second quarter. It's the most lucrative quarter he's had. Hopefully we'll have a big cash-on-hand at the end of the primary. The contentious and by the day more nasty primary on the other side is something we've been observing in the state, and seeing how they talk about each other at Lincoln Day dinners, I think these guys are showing it is as real as we've said."

As for the Stewart Superior story, Hanscom said, "Here's the deal, Joe did not know this was going on. This is a company he hasn't had any day-to-day involvement in 20 years. He's going to pull the money out of the company and sell the stock. He's going to focus on what really matters, which is his record on the issues."

He acknowledged that "to a degree it will be a factor," but said, "There will be a lot of things people will come into the state and say about Joe. But Hoosiers know the record of who Joe Donnelly is. His position on renegotiating NAFTA hasn't changed since 2004 when he ran for Congress for the first time."

Hanscom said the real focus should be on the 300 Carrier jobs in Indianapolis that will end this month. "There are 300 Carrier workers who are going to be laid off. Republicans are still unwilling to come to the table."

Rokita optimistic on the budget

Rokita, vice chairman of the budget committee, voiced optimism on the budget, but demands continued dedication. "The future of our nation demands that my colleagues and I create a balanced budget and that means acting now," said Rokita. "Under President Obama, our families suffered and many felt like the American dream was gone. By creating a balanced budget, we can revive the American dream by stopping our country's out-of-control spending and dangerous borrowing from China. This budget also addresses our nation's growing fiscal crisis, mandatory spending. By cutting \$203 billion over 10 years, our country will focus limited resources on those most vulnerable while encouraging a culture of self-reliance instead of government reliance."

Congress

Second quarter FEC delegation reports

Here are the totals for the second quarter and cycle for the Indiana congressional delegation:

1CD: Rep. Pete Visclosky (D) \$112,783.58 quarter, \$269,446.20 year, \$431,349.89 COH;

2CD: Rep. Jackie Walorski (R) \$289,599 quarter, \$559,975 year, \$476,272 COH;

3CD: Rep. Jim Banks (R) \$97,969 quarter, \$289,602 year, \$204,712 COH;

4CD: Rep. Todd Rokita (R) \$1,041,715 quarter, \$1,523,894 for cycle, \$2,353,034 COH;

5CD: Rep. Susan Brooks \$161,058 quarter, \$310,714 year, \$1,421,068 COH;

6CD: Rep. Luke Messer (R) \$578,185 second quarter, \$1,523,894 year, \$2,027,518 COH;

7CD: Rep. Andre Carson (D) \$148,140 quarter, \$224,921 year, \$899,076.78 COH;

8CD: Rep. Larry Bucshon (R) \$153,203 quarter, \$223,703 year, \$445,040 COH;

9CD: Rep. Trey Hollingworth (R) \$268,912 quarter, \$462,364 year, \$256,571 COH.

6th CD

Greg Pence focused on Messer

Greg Pence, brother of Vice President Mike Pence, told Howey Politics Indiana on Wednesday that he has spent little time considering a potential 6th CD run if Rep.



Messer opts for the Senate race. "I promised Luke that when I came on board. You'll be a real straight shooter," he said. "I have had no conversations with anybody because I don't want to compromise my counsel on Luke I sure have gotten a lot of calls. A lot of people have talked to me about it. We're going to get Luke through his decision process."

State Sens. Mike Crider and Jean Ann Leising are also weighing bids.

Leising is a two-time nominee.

General Assembly

Finkham joins SD20 caucus race

Another Hamilton County politician has joined the race to replace retiring state Sen. Luke Kenley (Erdody, Indianapolis Business Journal). Carmel City Council President Sue Finkam announced Wednesday that she will run in the upcoming Republican caucus for the District 20 seat,



which covers the northeast side of Carmel, Noblesville and Westfield. "After speaking with local business and community leaders, it is readily apparent they are looking for a champion who will lead with a laser-like focus to advance the interests of the four unique, fast-growing Hamilton County communities that make up this district," Finkam said in a prepared statement. "I will listen, learn and work tirelessly around the clock to

ensure local needs are put first." Noblesville City Council President Megan Wiles and businessman Scott Willis are preparing runs. Willis unsuccessfully ran against Kenley in 2016. Kenley already has thrown his support behind Wiles.

❖

Presidential impacts on mid-term elections

By **KYLE KONDIK**
Sabato's Crystal Ball

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – As they dig their trenches to try to withstand what may (or may not be) a Democratic wave, Republicans may take heart in the performance of their current incumbents last year as a buffer against a potentially challenging environment next year.

Very few of the Republicans' 241 House victories last year were small. Just 15 districts featured a GOP win in the single digits, meaning that 226 House Republicans had margins of victory of 10 points or more. So in order to capture a majority, Democrats must win several districts that most recently delivered decisive wins to the GOP.

However, the results from the last election may not actually be all that meaningful because House performance can vary greatly from one election to the next, particularly if there is a wave-style environment. The last three midterms are illustrative in this regard.

During the 2006, 2010, and 2014 midterms – all of which featured decisive House victories for the non-presidential party, which is relatively common in midterms – we looked at how the two-party vote shares for candidates from the president's party changed from the preceding presidential year to the midterm. In other words, we looked at the Republican two-party vote share in 2006 compared to 2004 (under Republican President George W. Bush), and the Democratic vote share in 2010 compared to 2008 and in 2014 compared to 2012 (under Democratic President Barack Obama).

Over those three midterms, about 1,000 races, 1,001 to be precise, satisfied the requirements for inclusion in this study.

On average, the presidential party's share of the two-party vote declined by 5.3 percentage points in these three midterms from the previous cycle's results. And, since we're just taking into account the two-party vote, the actual average change in margin is double that, because when the president's party share declines, the non-president's party share grows by that same number.

So the average reduction in the presidential party margin in these thousand House races was actually 10.6 points. That kind of change turns a 55%-45% win for a House candidate from the president's party into roughly a 50%-50% coin flip.

The median was a little bit lower than that, about a 9.2-point decline in margin. Of the 1,001 races we looked at, the president's party share fell by at least some amount in

close to nine of 10 of all the races, 874 total (or 87%). So the presidential party margin grew from the presidential election to the midterm in more than a tenth of these races despite the overall trend against that party. The presidential party experienced an erosion in performance in the lion's share of House districts from the presidential to the midterm year.

The declines varied by cycle, with the president's party seeing their biggest average vote share losses in 2010 (7.5 points, or about 15 marginal points), with smaller but still sizable decreases coming in 2006 (4.6 points, or 9.2 marginal points) and 2014 (3.5 points, or about seven marginal points). Part of that probably had to do with the comparison to the previous presidential year House results. In both 2004 and 2012, the national House popular vote was fairly close – Re-

Race/Topic (Click to Sort)	Poll	Results	Spread
President Trump Job Approval	FOX News	Approve 41, Disapprove 53	Disapprove +12
President Trump Job Approval	Gallup	Approve 37, Disapprove 57	Disapprove +20
President Trump Job Approval	Rasmussen Reports	Approve 42, Disapprove 58	Disapprove +16
President Trump Job Approval	Reuters/Ipsos	Approve 38, Disapprove 58	Disapprove +20
President Trump Job Approval	Economist/YouGov	Approve 39, Disapprove 56	Disapprove +17
Congressional Job Approval	Economist/YouGov	Approve 10, Disapprove 64	Disapprove +54
Congressional Job Approval	Reuters/Ipsos	Approve 23, Disapprove 66	Disapprove +43
2018 Generic Congressional Vote	ABC News/Wash Post	Democrats 52, Republicans 38	Democrats +14

publicans won it by 2.6 points in 2004 and Democrats by 1.4 points in 2012 -- before the other party carried the national popular vote by a larger margin in the subsequent midterm – Democrats by 6.4 points in 2006, Republicans by 5.1 points in 2014. Meanwhile, Democrats won the national House vote by 10.6 points in 2008, which shifted to a 6.6-point Republican edge just two years later, contributing to the huge average Democratic vote share losses in 2010.

The president's party has lost ground in the House in 36 of the 39 midterms since the Civil War, and the average seat loss is 33. Democrats netted 31 seats in 2006 during George W. Bush's second midterm, and Republicans netted 63 and 13 seats, respectively, in 2010 and 2014 during Barack Obama's two midterms. The GOP gain in 2014 was relatively small in large part because the party already held 234 seats going into that midterm, and their 13-seat net gain gave them their biggest majority (247) since before the Great Depression.

The presidential midterm problem compounds whenever the president's approval rating is underwater: Bush's was -16 (39% approve/55% disapprove) in the RealClearPolitics average on Election Day 2006, and Obama's was -3 (46%/49%) in 2010 and -11 (42%/53%) in 2014. Right now, President Trump is at -16 (40%/56%), and Democrats hold a seven-point lead in the RealClearPolitics national House generic ballot polling. So the threat to the Republican House majority is clear, even though of course those numbers have plenty of time to change. ❖

Walorski is targeted by DCCC, but . . .

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – For Democrats to win control of the House next year – possible, though not yet probable – they must upset some Republicans entrenched in “safe” seats, such as Rep. Jackie Walorski in Indiana’s 2nd District.



Walorski is targeted by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

But so are many other Republican incumbents, most of them in districts in which they appear to be more vulnerable than Walorski.

She is regarded as “safe” in most national evaluations. And why not? She won a

third term in 2016 by nearly 62,000 votes, carrying nine of the 10 counties in the district and just barely losing in St. Joseph County, supposed bastion of Democratic strength.

Walorski, however, is a target because of other past elections. She lost in her first race for Congress in 2010 to Joe Donnelly, who then was the incumbent congressman, and won in a squeaker for a first term in 2012 in a race with Brendan Mullen. Polls showed high negative perceptions of her back then.

Then she won big against challengers Joe Bock in 2014 and Lynn Coleman in 2016. Neither of those challengers got any support from the DCCC. The political climate was favorable for Republicans in Indiana in those elections.

So, the question now for Democratic strategists looking at the national picture is whether Walorski retains some of that vulnerability from her first two races or whether she now has gained popularity and become entrenched after two big wins.

The DCCC lists Walorski as targeted, as an incumbent who could be vulnerable if facing a strong challenger in a more Democratic climate than last time.

But they won’t actually shoot for all 79 Republican-held districts now on the official target list. Can’t. Not enough ammunition. They can’t concentrate on every district where they see a possibility of a competitive race. They can’t provide big funding everywhere. PACS favoring

Democrats can’t be persuaded to go on TV against every possibly vulnerable Republican incumbent everywhere. Staff and polling can’t be provided everywhere.

Support will be selective as Democrats nationally seek to win the 24 additional seats needed to gain control of the 435-member House.

As Democratic challengers are selected and their skills at campaigning and fund-raising become apparent and polls show which ones have a realistic chance to win, selections will be made on where all-out efforts could be most productive.

They won’t allocate resources against Walorski unless they see a challenger with a real chance to win.

St. Joseph County Democratic Chair Jason Critchlow says there has been no shortage of potential candidates expressing interest. They include male and female, young and old, from inside and outside St. Joseph County, some with potential, others not so much.

Coleman would welcome another contest with Walorski. He improved as a candidate during the 2016 campaign and did about as well as he could as the Trump tsunami hit Indiana and made victory in the 2nd District impossible. Does he have potential now, after going through a campaign and gaining name recognition, to win in a better year?

The DCCC was impressed with another candidate. But that candidate may choose not to run.

It may seem strange more than a year before the next congressional election, but time is running out.

Millions are already being raised by candidates around the nation. Fund-raising, organizing and getting known throughout a district takes time.

A poll in the district by the DCCC and Indiana Democratic Party is expected to show just how vulnerable Walorski might be, whether her vote for that “mean” House version of Trumpcare hurt her, whether past negative perceptions still exist or have

vanished and what type of challenger might have a chance to win.

As Democrats then search for those 24 seats they need, they will decide later on the real targeting, the best targets. And that will be based on cold, pragmatic analysis, not personal feelings about challengers or incumbents. ❖



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

Encourage good media

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – A lot of people want what I do from the media and feel they're not getting it: More facts and fewer opinions; more investigative reporters and fewer pundits; more substance and less fluff; more policy exploration and less politics.

I'll be the first to admit that when it comes to journalism, I'm a traditionalist. Old-fashioned, even. But I don't think it's a coincidence that even while confidence in the media drops to new lows and Time magazine feels moved to wonder "Is Truth Dead?" on its cover, huge numbers of Americans have come to believe the media is not as authoritative as it once was.



Straightforward, responsible journalism is an indispensable public asset, a cornerstone of democratic life. This is threatened by the trends reshaping the media landscape. With less consensus around information and data, the cohesiveness of our society is diminished.

I'm not just talking about the rise of deliberately "reported" misinformation and disinformation. Some news outlets may not

be as egregiously destructive of democratic values, but their urge to chase viewership and clicks at the expense of solid, fact-based reporting is doing us no favors. Indeed, I think a lot of people also want more respect for consumers and fewer efforts to manipulate them.

Is it really behind the times to expect journalists to seek accuracy above all? To pay attention to fairness? To strive to keep government honest and the voters informed? To check facts, use multiple sources, and welcome rigorous editing? I don't think so.

Nor do I believe that infusing the news with a political agenda serves our society or news consumers. There may be no such thing as absolute objectivity, but you can sure strive to get as close as possible. Some news organizations do this. Too many don't.

This is not to say that editorializing and expressing opinion have no place in journalism. But opinions should be separated from reporting. Too many journalists want to be pundits and not reporters. I've had any number tell me they're in the business to express their own opinion rather than report the truth. When I turn on the

television and find five or six pundits vociferously sharing their views, it's diverting, but in the end I'm not that interested in what they think. I'd rather have someone tell me the facts so that I can form my own opinions.

In a media world in which opinion serves as the chief currency, rather than straight-ahead reporting of hard truths, politicians face less scrutiny of their statements and less accountability. They are succeeding at manipulating the media by using Twitter, refusing to hold press conferences, restricting questions and cameras, employing set speeches, and refusing to conduct a free-wheeling discussion of their opinions in front of the press.

The result is that significant policy decisions affecting millions of Americans are being drawn up with less scrutiny and promoted as beneficial without the clarifying debate that a representative democracy depends upon. Without it, we know less about our officials and legislators, what they think about the issues and what they do.

The picture is not entirely bleak. We are fortunate to retain a number of high-quality news organizations with first-rate reporters. The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Financial Times, The Economist, CNN, PBS, ProPublica, Politico, and other news organizations continue to dig deep and uphold high journalistic standards even in the face of the tsunami of media disruption that has taken place over the past decade. They and others have stepped up their games in recent months, partly in response to citizens desperate for hard-nosed and accurate reporting. And where they've gone astray, they've usually owned up to it quickly.

This is crucial, because we live in an era when solid reporting rooted in high standards of accuracy is not just a goal, but a vital, small-d democratic necessity. As consumers of news, we need to encourage the media to undertake it and hold its members to account when they stray. And we need to shoulder our responsibility for helping news organizations improve. After all, we're the ones who turn to fluff rather than substance and consume only stories that reflect our own perspectives. As citizens, we need to step up our own game, too. ❖

Lee Hamilton is a Senior Advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a Distinguished Scholar, IU School of Global and International Studies; and a Professor of Practice, IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

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

Living in sin just ain't what it used to be

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Pristina Plowmouth objected to last week's column in this space. That contribution to social and economic awareness focused on the growing phenomenon of people living alone.



"Disheartening," she said, calling from her estate in Hamilton County. "People living alone are the tragic residue of society's dissolution. It is the inevitable consequence of delayed marriage, divorce, inappropriate abortion, excessive consumption from bloated incomes, an unfortunate, yet foreseeable outcome, of misguided female emancipation, disregard of traditional

generational integration, and blind obsession with personal gratification above familial obligation."

"Thank you," was all I could reply. "You'll delight in this week's offering about unmarried couples living together."

"Where did you obtain such scandalous statistics?" she huffed. "Please, abstain from asking me to give credence to dirty data."

"Don't you want to know how many such households are in Hamilton County?" I asked and answered before she could reply.

"There were over 4,600 unmarried-partner households with opposite sex couples in your county in 2015 according to the Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey. That's just 4.1% of all households in the county.

So, among Indiana's 25 most populous counties, Hamilton ranked seventh in the number of such households, but 23rd in the percent of all households."

"Vile!" her voice quivered with rage. "Don't tell me more."

Nevertheless I said.

"The Census Bureau doesn't give us a figure for households in Hamilton County where same sex partners reside. But I figure the number to be fewer than 60."

"Oh, let that be the case," Pristina implored. After some deep gasps, she said, "I imagine the college counties were the most immoral with all those young people and the older, hippie faculty that never grew to accept responsibility."

"Sorry," I reported. "Morgan County led the passion parade at nine percent of all households housing unmarried same sex partners. Tippecanoe was third at eight percent, then Marion and Delaware at 7.1%, Monroe at 6.5 and Vigo at 6.4%."

"Was there no place of purity?" she moaned.

"Hancock County was last of the 25 most populous counties with 2.9% of households."

"And then, there is still that other kind," her voice trailed off.

"Yes; Survey says," I always wanted to say that, "in addition to the 90,000 Hoosiers who are partners in non-family households, there are 69,000 partners in family households."

"Horrors! Where there may be children present?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, that's the way it is," I said. "We have about 159,000 or six percent of Hoosier households with unmarried couples involving 318,000 persons or five percent of Indiana's population."

1 U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2015 American Community Survey							
		Total Population	Number of Unmarried partners in family households	Number of Unmarried partners in Non-family households	Total households	Percent of total households with unmarried partner of	
2 Geography						Same Sex	Opposite Sex
3	United States	321,418,821	3,205,347	4,176,172	118,208,250	0.4	5.8
4	Indiana	6,619,680	68,957	90,421	2,515,143	0.2	6.1
5							
6	Allen County	368,450	4,147	4,834	142,476	0.3	5.8
7	Bartholomew County	81,162	770	1,287	31,131	0.1	6.3
8	Clark County	115,371	1,217	899	44,263	0.1	4.7
9	Delaware County	116,852	1,355	2,233	45,278	0.6	7.1
10	Elkhart County	203,474	2,363	2,854	68,498	0.2	7.2
11	Floyd County	76,778	470	959	29,246	0.3	3.9
12	Grant County	67,979	501	1,315	25,137	0.9	6.6
13	Hamilton County	309,697	1,251	3,363	113,267	N	4.1
14	Hancock County	72,520	320	489	27,593	N	2.9
15	Hendricks County	158,192	1,639	997	56,088	N	4.3
16	Howard County	82,556	956	1,143	34,714	0.3	5.6
17	Johnson County	149,633	1,311	1,598	54,458	0.3	4.9
18	Kosciusko County	78,620	806	1,428	29,867	N	7.3
19	Lake County	487,865	6,152	5,591	186,564	0.1	6.3
20	LaPorte County	110,884	1,447	1,922	43,169	0.2	8.4
21	Madison County	129,723	1,581	1,975	51,421	0.3	6.5
22	Marion County	939,020	10,930	16,417	365,296	0.5	7.1
23	Monroe County	144,705	976	2,869	54,598	0.5	6.5
24	Morgan County	69,648	1,117	1,039	25,033	N	9.0
25	Porter County	167,688	1,612	1,634	62,424	0.1	4.9
26	St. Joseph County	268,441	2,700	3,028	98,835	0.3	5.3
27	Tippecanoe County	185,826	1,613	4,140	69,857	0.2	8.0
28	Vanderburgh County	181,877	2,314	2,172	73,991	0.2	5.9
29	Vigo County	107,896	1,179	1,900	41,981	1.0	6.4
30	Wayne County	67,001	1,103	401	24,238	N	7.0

"That's grotesque," Pristina proclaimed. "What's happened to our morals, our standards, our traditions?"

"Maybe they haven't changed," I suggested. "The past may not have been what we imagined."

"What are we going to do about these?" she couldn't find the word.

"People," I said. "Try giving them our blessing and wish them happiness." ❖

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

It's personal for Trump with Barack Obama

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – It's becoming clear that President Donald Trump doesn't like former President Barack Obama. It's not a political thing. It's personal. And it's driving Trump – and to a lesser extent, Vice President Mike Pence – up a wall.



And, yes, the springboard is the Affordable Care Act, which is better known as Obamacare.

I think it's a jealousy thing. Obama twice won the popular vote while Trump didn't in his one try.

Trump started the birther movement, contending Obama

wasn't born in the United States. And Trump never let go of the issue. And Trump was offended when Obama said he wasn't mentally fit to be president. And virtually anytime something goes wrong, Trump blames it on Obama.

What really eats at Trump is Obamacare. The repeal and replace of Obamacare was at the heart of Trump's campaign. I'm not terribly sure why, given what people are saying today.

Last November, just before being elected, Trump said, "My poll numbers are going through the roof. Part (of the reason) is Obamacare."

There was a time when Trump and some other Republicans – most notably Pence – thought "repealing and replacing Obamacare" was the Lord's Prayer of the Republican Party.

Whatever led Trump and others to think the Obamacare thing was the Republican path to victory, forgot to ask the American people. The polls are overwhelmingly showing that Obamacare is popular, and that with a few changes ought to continue to be the law of the land.

Since being elected, Trump has talked repeatedly about how easy it will be to repeal and replace Obamacare. And, to date, he hasn't got it done. Now Trump wants Obamacare to fail and be replaced with a player to be named later.

That's unfair to the American people. Trump seems to have become obsessed with Obamacare.

Just this week, Trump said that if Obamacare dies, "I'm not going to own it."

I suspect Trump would be a whole lot better off if he'd admit that Obama is smoother and brighter and better able to woo the American people. ❖

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.



Dave Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier:

How could we let the moment pass on the edge of West Lafayette, just one stop Thursday on Gov. Eric Holcomb's three-day tour to showcase the first five years of projects in a 20-year state road plan, without a shout out to the Interstate 65 bridge over Wildcat Creek? Two summers ago, the state had to close a 50-mile section of I-65, from Lebanon to Wolcott, after crews adding lanes to the bridge discovered that some of its support was sinking. That forced the motoring public on the crowded interstate to fight through winding detours that overwhelmed rural towns, which were quickly littered with a collection of four-letter greetings hurled from driver's side windows. For five weeks that went on. That also launched a host of promises and plans – some rash, some half-baked, most simply dead on arrival – to deal with Indiana's road and bridge maintenance. So, Holcomb was asked within view of a stretch of U.S. 231 used in the state's official I-65 detour, would the 20-year plan you helped usher through the General Assembly this year have happened without the lingering memory of the summer of 2015 nightmare on I-65? Was that the moment that brought us here today? "I don't like to look back," Holcomb said in an Indiana Department of Transportation garage. "I like to look forward. I like to think we would have rose to the occasion regardless." The plan has INDOT putting \$4.7 billion toward resurfacing 10,000 miles of road and repairing or replacing some 1,300 bridges over the next five years. "We did this because Hoosiers said they expected and deserved to have their roads maintained and that we needed to meet our needs," Holcomb said. Hand it to Holcomb and the legislature for figuring out something. And not just anything. ❖



Jon Webb, Evansville Courier & Press:

I don't think Wayne Parke and Cheryl Musgrave like each other. Sometimes you pick up on vibes. Like when your mom sucker-punches your wife in the middle of a K-Mart and you start to think, maybe there's some tension there. Monday evening, Parke – the chairman of the Vanderburgh County Republican party – sent a press release to local media saying Musgrave and her husband Robert had been ousted from their respective positions as vice-precinct committeeman and precinct committeeman. Robert apparently broke an intraparty rule by donating \$500 to Democrat Gail Riecken's 2015 mayoral bid against Lloyd Winnecke. This comes only a few months after Parke demanded Cheryl Musgrave's resignation from the County Commissioners after she pushed to remove Jacob Murphy as manager of Burdette Park in March. "I do not believe you are performing your County Commissioner responsibilities in the best interest of the Vanderburgh County citizens. Vanderburgh County needs people in office that unite -- not a divider who has their own personal agenda," Parke said in an April email. Musgrave laughed at Parke

then. And on Tuesday, her response was similar. "Wayne Parke is a bully and I pay no attention to anything he says or does," she told the Courier & Press' Zach Evans. Parke replied: "I think she should look in the mirror and see what a real bully looks like." Good to see our local legislators graduated from the Pee-Wee Herman School of Political Discourse. ❖

Joe Scarborough, Washington Post:

I did not leave the Republican Party. The Republican Party left its senses. The political movement that once stood athwart history resisting bloated government and military adventurism has been reduced to an amalgam of talk-radio resentments. President Trump's Republicans have devolved into a party without a cause, dominated by a leader hopelessly ill-informed about the basics of conservatism, U.S. history and the Constitution. America's first Republican president reportedly said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity. But if you want to test a man's character, give him power." The current Republican president and the party he controls were granted monopoly power over Washington in November and already find themselves spectacularly failing Abraham Lincoln's character exam. It would take far more than a single column to detail Trump's failures in the months following his bleak inaugural address. But the Republican leaders who have subjugated themselves to the White House's corrupting influence fell short of Lincoln's standard long before their favorite reality-TV star brought his gaudy circus act to Washington. Political historians will one day view Donald Trump as a historical anomaly. But the wreckage visited of this man will break the Republican Party into pieces — and lead to the election of independent thinkers no longer tethered to the tired dogmas of the polarized past. ❖

Matt Tully, IndyStar:

Many Democrats have celebrated recent polls showing that President Trump's approval rating continues its waterfall-like decline, along with support for a Senate Republican health care plan that seems to have failed. South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg, however, looked at those same polls and saw something different — something he rightly believes his fellow Democrats should be both worried about and working on. The source of his concern: Data showing that most Americans do not see Democrats as the party of ideas or solutions, or as representative of the middle class. How bad is it? Well, a Washington Post poll taken last week found that only 37 percent of Americans, and only 32 percent of independents, think the Democratic Party "stands for something" other than opposing the president. "That's a problem," Buttigieg wrote on Twitter. Yes, it is. Particularly for a party that has found every which way to lose elections of late. Buttigieg said those poll results should be seen as a warning to a party that might be willing to settle for being the ardent voice of the loyal opposition. ❖

Carrier to lay off 338 jobs today

INDIANAPOLIS — Carrier Corp. plans to eliminate 338 jobs at its Indianapolis furnace factory Thursday — and the timing is likely to raise some eyebrows (Cook & Briggs, IndyStar). The previously announced layoffs coincide, to the day, with the six-month anniversary of Donald Trump's presidency. They are part of a deal Trump struck with the company in December to prevent deeper job cuts at the plant. The terminations are the first wave of about 630 planned before the end of the year as the company shifts work to Mexico. Carrier's parent company, United Technologies Corp., also plans to lay off another 700 workers at a factory in Huntington near Fort Wayne. Carrier in a statement said it "continues to honor its 2016 commitment to employ approximately 1,100 associates in Indianapolis. As announced in November, this includes headquarters and engineering jobs and more than 800 employees supporting our world-class gas furnace manufacturing center."



State has \$1.74B in reserves

INDIANAPOLIS — State Auditor Tera Klutz announced Wednesday that Indiana spent \$42 million less than it collected in taxes during the 2017 budget year that ended June 30 and has \$1.78 billion in reserves (Carden, NWI Times). "This is good news for Indiana taxpayers," Klutz said. "Just like hardworking Hoosiers across the state of Indiana, we continue to live within our means, we pay our bills on time, we provide needed services as well as plan for the future." The annual budget surplus was built in part through strong year-over-year growth in sales tax (3.7 percent increase) and personal income tax (4.2 percent) collections, according to

Micah Vincent, director of the Indiana Office of Management and Budget. The administration of Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb also held back \$318 million in spending appropriated by the Republican-controlled General Assembly, about one-third of which was money set aside for Medicaid expenses that did not materialize. "As we close the books on another fiscal year, Indiana's financial position remains strong," Holcomb said. "With more than a decade of balanced budgets and healthy reserves behind us, we must remain vigilant to maintain our position as the fiscal envy of the nation. To do that, we must continue managing our state's finances carefully, diversify our economy and grow our workforce."

McCain has brain cancer

WASHINGTON — Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) has been diagnosed with a brain tumor, his office said Wednesday (Washington Post). The Mayo Clinic Hospital in Phoenix said tests revealed "a primary brain tumor known as a glioblastoma" associated with a blood clot above his left eye that was removed last week. "The Senator and his family are reviewing further treatment options with his Mayo Clinic care team," said the hospital in a statement.

Trump blasts Sessions on recusal

WASHINGTON — President Trump said on Wednesday that he never would have appointed Attorney General Jeff Sessions had he known Mr. Sessions would recuse himself from overseeing the Russia investigation that has dogged his presidency, calling the decision "very unfair to the president" (New York Times). In a remarkable public break with one of his earliest political supporters, Mr. Trump complained that Mr. Sessions's decision ultimately led to the appointment of a special counsel that should not have happened. "Sessions should

have never recused himself, and if he was going to recuse himself, he should have told me before he took the job and I would have picked somebody else," Mr. Trump said.

Trump Jr, Kushner, Manafort to testify

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump Jr. and former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort have been scheduled to testify before the Senate judiciary committee on July 26, the panel announced Wednesday (CNN). President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner is also expected to appear before the Senate intelligence committee on Monday. A source told CNN Kushner's testimony would be behind closed doors. The interest in Trump Jr. and Manafort builds on already intensive congressional investigations.

McKinney and Hendrickson to DC

WASHINGTON — Gov. Eric J. Holcomb offered the following statement regarding President Donald J. Trump's declaration of intent to nominate Ted McKinney for the USDA post of undersecretary for trade and foreign agricultural affairs: "Ted will be a strong voice in this new role with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He took agriculture to the next level in Indiana with his wealth of experience and enthusiasm in all sectors of the agriculture community, and I know he will do the same for our nation in this position as undersecretary for trade and foreign agricultural affairs." The director of the Indiana State Personnel Department is leaving for a new position in Washington D.C. Brandye Hendrickson, the former commissioner of the Indiana Department of Transportation, has been named a deputy administrator with the Federal Highway Administration (Brown, Inside Indiana Business). Britni Saunders, deputy director of talent management for the INSPD, will serve as interim director.