

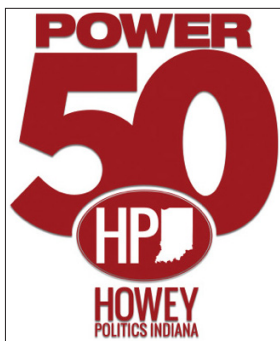


HPI Power 50: Indiana at a crossroads

The 2018 list is dominated by Holcomb, Pence, the Senate race and a question of Democratic survival

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana is, famously, the crossroads of America. As we head into 2018, this state stands at a nexus



that eclipses the nation and world. Indiana is poised for what we've been calling the \$100 million U.S. Senate race that could determine which party controls the upper chamber.

We watch in fascination Vice President Mike Pence and Director of National Security Dan Coats attempt to keep President Trump within the guardrails, as his volatility via Twitter rattles everywhere



from Congress to capitals around the world. This surfaced once again on Tuesday when Trump goaded North Korea tyrant Kim Jong Un via tweet, comparing the size of his

Continued on page 3

A haywire White House

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – And the hits keep coming to what we now know is the "reality TV presidency" of Donald Trump.

On the second and third day of 2018, we find President Trump moving away from comparing body appendages (something we haven't been subjected to since the Clinton White House), to who has a bigger nuclear "button." As crass as who has the bigger package – Trump or Little Rocket Man – perhaps the more disturbing aspect is that Trump may actually believe the "button" exists, as opposed to the "biscuit."



"I have had many life transitions, from child, to an adult, to a mother, to a police officer, to a school board member, to a representative. This is a new chapter in my life and I am excited for another transition."

- Rep. Linda Lawson, who won't seek reelection.



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During the first three days of 2018, President Trump compared his own Department of Justice to the "deep state," suggested via Twitter that Hillary Clinton aide Huma Abedin and former FBI Director James Comey should be jailed, and took credit for zero commercial airline deaths in 2017 (there hasn't been a fatality since 2009).

Trump's schedule was light on Tuesday, so he had time for 16 tweets. Sixteen tweets!

But these were nothing compared to the bombshell dropped by The Guardian via former Trump senior aide Steve Bannon, who talked about the meeting in the summer of 2016 between son Donald Jr., Paul Manafort, and son-in-law Jared Kushner with President Putin's henchmen.

Bannon has described the Trump Tower meeting as "treasonous" and "unpatriotic", according to an explosive new book seen by The Guardian and written by author Michael Wolff.

Bannon was quoted, saying, "The three senior guys in the campaign thought it was a good idea to meet with a foreign government inside Trump Tower in the conference room on the 25th floor – with no lawyers. They didn't have any lawyers. Even if you thought that this was not treasonous, or unpatriotic, or bad shit, and I happen to think it's all of that, you should have called the FBI immediately."

So while President Trump has called the entire Russia/campaign probe by Robert Mueller a "witch hunt" and repeatedly tells us "there was no collusion" (this coming from a man who is on course for 2,000 documented lies, falsehoods and misleading statements), we now have his former chief adviser suggesting "treason."

Treason.
 Here's the quandary many of

us face with this president: The Teflon has been very thick, particularly with the 35% of Americans who make up his base. For the rest of us, including a good chunk of the Republican Party, this has been like grappling with one fantastic or bizarre tale after another. It's exhausting.

A president comparing "button" sizes with a North Korean despot would normally have dominated the headlines for several news cycles.

Mike Allen of Axios reports that West Wingers are startled. "Every



war in history was an accident," said one administration insider. "You just don't know what's going to send him over the edge." The danger here is that Kim is also an unpredictable actor, and not one fully understood by U.S. intelligence. Another West Wing source told Axios, "This is the most important issue on the president's desk. We are in a hair-trigger environment. And this is potentially a shooting war with nuclear risk."

And then we get the Bannon installment.

To which Trump responded, "Steve Bannon has nothing to do with me or my presidency. When he was fired, he not only lost his job, he lost his mind. Steve was a staffer who worked for me after I had already won the nomination by defeating seventeen candidates, often described as the most talented field ever assembled in the Republican party. Now that he is on his own, Steve is learning that winning isn't as easy as I make it look. Steve had very little to do with our

historic victory, which was delivered by the forgotten men and women of this country. Yet Steve had everything to do with the loss of a Senate seat in Alabama held for more than thirty years by Republicans. Steve doesn't represent my base, he's only in it for himself."

Ezra Klein of Vox Media observed Wednesday afternoon, "The Trump era has given me this persistent feeling of unreality. I am watching this, and reporting on it, and covering it, and there's a part of me that still can't believe it's happening, that these tweets are real, that this man is actually the president."

CNN and ABC News analyst Jeff Greenfield noted, "Well, Trump said Bannon lost his mind AFTER he left the WH ... which would mean he was sane when he talked to Wolff ... which would mean...you know, I think I have reached my Bannon-Wolff-Trump freak-out quota."

Author Mark Harris tweeted, "Trump put the man he's now calling an insane former 'staffer' on the National Security Council in his first week in office."

The Weekly Standard's Bill Kristol noted, "Most of @POTUS's craziness seems so far to have been confined to speech, not deeds. But I trust @VP has asked his counsel to prepare a draft document transferring power in accord with Sec. 4 of 25th Amendment in case it's suddenly needed, & that he's discussed this with COS Kelly."

So what was Vice President Pence's reaction to the

"button" tweets? He sent out a statement on Wednesday, "President Trump has provided the kind of clear leadership on the world stage that's made measurable progress, particularly with regard to North Korea. In his message the President sent – in the wake of Kim Jong Un's New Year's message, where, while on one hand he talked about wanting to reach out to his neighbors to the south, it's the same moment he spoke of having missiles that could reach the United States and having a button on his desk. President Trump made it clear, America will not be bullied, American will not be threatened, and that the United States of America has, by being clear, managed to marshal an unprecedented amount of economic and diplomatic pressure on North Korea."

As I've noted on a number of occasions to my Republican friends, they should trust their initial instincts. Their loyalty and affirmation to Vice President Pence is understandable. But at some point, when the weird scenes inside the goldmine reach Alice's Wonderland, many of us wonder if they will have the patriotic necessity to say, "This cannot continue. Enough."

The thing they should remember is this isn't playing out in nooks and crannies any more. Author Michael Wolff hung out in the West Wing for weeks, and taped dozens of interviews.

The whole world's watching. So is history. ❖

Power 50, from page 1

nuclear "button" (Trump has a fixation on size, whether it's body appendages or the nation's nuclear arsenal).

Indiana is mired in an opioid epidemic, and this places Gov. Eric Holcomb and key members of his administration on the front lines of one of the most compelling, lethal health and legal dilemmas to hit this state in a generation. Failure on this front means swamped county jails which have become akin to drug treatment facilities, to local schools with limited budgets, unable to keep up with a flood of special needs children, many who are being raised by their grandparents.

Because this is an election year, a number of Democrats are elevated on this year's list, not necessarily due to past performance, but for the fact that



if they fail to end the Republican super majorities in the General Assembly as well as the congressional delegation, Indiana could essentially become a one-party state for the coming decade. The stakes in 2018 are absolutely critical for Indiana Democrats.

We have entered an era when norms are being shattered, whether it is by President Trump and his promised disruptions, to female voices rising in the #MeToo movement that while thus far has largely evaded Indiana, it is changing norms in newsrooms, board rooms and in the warrens of power in and around us.

Trump's presidency will not end well. It could be stymied for two years following the mid-term elections, if the Democrats gain control of the House or Senate. His agenda will go nowhere on Capitol Hill to the extent Trump even has a policy agenda. Perhaps Trump will get blown away in the 2020 election – or he will quit before subjecting himself to such a loss. Michael Wolff's new book, "Fire and Fury" describes a Trump and team stunned at actually winning the election and now faces an investigation that will likely unlock his many business secrets. Less likely, he

will quit before completing his first term or will be impeached.

One of the outcomes above is much more likely than a successful first term that results in a reelection. Such a result is already foreshadowed in his current approval rating that has a ceiling of 40% despite a vibrant stock market and growing economy. Trump can only go down from here.

In the face of this inevitability, the Republican members of the Indiana congressional delegation have done nothing to put any distance between themselves and Trump with the possible exception – but only in a relative sense – of Rep. Jim Banks. It's a huge gamble with little upside potential beyond the short term – and even at that, it's a gamble that will fail as soon as the November mid-terms. An electoral wipe out will change Trump's cult of personality hold over the GOP.

No one has stepped out to say "Enough is enough" when Trump goes over the top with a bombastic Tweet or an empty threat directed at his political opponents. And they have little to say when he tarnishes America's global reputation by shooting from the hip on foreign policy. When the Trump administration collapses, none of them will have so much as a courageous statement, let alone a courageous vote, to give them political cover. In this case, silence erodes integrity.

Here is our 2018 HPI Power 50 list which we develop to forecast who is likely to define the issues and shape what looks to be a third consecutive compelling year.

1. Gov. Eric Holcomb: As we've noted frequently this past year, the governor is off to about as good start as we can remember. Holcomb heads into the middle of his term with an aura of strength. The recent Public Opinion Strategies Poll for Indiana Realtors had his approval at 61% while 20% disapprove, while the state's right/wrong track stood at 59/34%, inverse of the national numbers at 36/57%. He embraced the legislative Republican infrastructure plan and has put into place his "Next Level" agenda that will pour concrete and spread asphalt across our highways and bridges for the coming generation. He has posited himself as a problem solver, and has dived into problems like the East Chicago lead contamination crisis, often with state and federal resources in his wings. Holcomb has been inclusive with the Democrats, inviting them on foreign economic development travels.

But the governor faces a challenging year as the

state is facing a teacher and workforce shortage, and an intensifying opioid pandemic that threatens to swamp state and local resources. This surfaced in a painful fashion when Department of Child Services Director Mary Beth Bonaventura resigned, citing systemic problems that could threaten lives. Holcomb has ordered an agency assessment and brought on Terry Stigdon from Riley Hospital to get a grip on things. He has provided an additional \$587 million for the agency. The opioid crisis could induce further collateral impacts, so his challenge will be to staunch a crisis almost everyone with knowledge says has yet to peak, and figure out solutions within the five-year time frame the governor has laid out.

On the legislative front, Holcomb will push his "Five Pillars" knowing full well there's a 90,000 job deficit and the need to fill 1 million more in the coming decade as the Baby Boom retires. And there are pesky issues, such as Sunday alcohol sales and cold beer. He has been coy on these, unwilling to use his ample political clout to move the needle, though he claims he wants to modernize Indiana's alcohol system. In his first year, Holcomb sometimes sided with entrenched special interests as when he signed legislation crimping what had been an emerging wind/solar energy sector. With reelection three years away, Holcomb shouldn't have to worry about alienating special interests with deep pockets like the liquor stores. He will have ample resources and should be able to deliver for his constituencies. And there could be an epic payoff with such an attitude if the state lands the \$5 billion, 50,000-job Amazon HQ2. Asked if Indiana was in the running, his response was,

"We better be." If Holcomb lands that whale, he could be poised to be the most popular and powerful governor in modern times.

Insiders view a governor constantly seeking input, talking through issues with many voices. They hope he will evolve toward using the historic reservoir of clout to steer outcomes in a more emphatic direction.

2. Vice President Mike Pence: He has entered unprecedented territory as a vice president with extraordinary access to the volatile President Trump. His unvarnished loyalty keeps him on the interior of the Trump inner sanctums, though many deride him as a bootlicker. Some speculate that Pence's lavish praise for the often profane and boorish POTUS is designed to keep Trump inside the guardrails. By clasping Trump so closely, Pence finds himself near the crosshairs of the Robert Mueller probe of the Trump campaign and purported collusion with



Gov. Holcomb greets a constituent at a Richmond McDonald's; Vice President Pence with President Trump.

the Russians. Pence was close to two of the most controversial elements in Mueller's sights: Michael Flynn's transition era outreach to the Russians, and Trump's decision last May to fire FBI Director James Comey. Pence and key gatekeepers like Chief of Staff Nick Ayres position Pence as either inside the loop when it serves their purposes, or in the Sgt. Schultz "I know nothing!" mode. So Pence is attempting to have it both ways. While Pence is immensely popular with Hoosier Republicans, a recent Public Opinion Strategies Poll for the Indiana Realtors shows his fav/unfav going from 40/16% in December 2011, to 55/20% when he became governor to 51/42% in November. So Pence retains some of his RFRA era polarization.

Pence headed both the Trump transition and the vote fraud commission that was disbanded Wednesday and both had major complications. Pence has shifted a number of long-term

stances on issues such as free trade and immigration, again to keep him in good graces with President Trump, who has a known penchant of jabbing and punishing allies and enemies alike. In another unprecedented dynamic, many believe that

Pence has a high probability of becoming the 46th president. That opportunity could arise with the death of the oldest elected president in history, impeachment, invocation of the 25th Amendment (which would place Pence in another extraordinary historical precedent) or if Trump resigns, which he wouldn't rule out in the summer of 2016. Pence is the Laird Hamilton of American politics, tow-surfing into an epic wave. How it crashes on shore, and who is devoured or delivered may be a story of Shakespearean proportions, and Pence will have a key supporting role in the entire saga.

3. U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly: The incumbent should be feeling pretty good about his chances for reelection right now. Even before Doug Jones pulled off a Democratic upset in Alabama's Senate special election in December, he already had enough confidence in his



political future to resist pressure from the Trump Administration and Vice President Pence to vote against the Republican tax bill. His potential Republican opponents in the Senate race – Reps. Todd Rokita and Luke Messer – excoriated Donnelly for voting with his Democratic colleagues. He sits on a large war chest (\$4.6 million at the 3Q mark). But Donnelly has demonstrated his bipartisan bone fides on the Senate Banking Committee, where he

was a key backer of legislation that would make changes to the Dodd-Frank financial reform law. The modifications target community banks and other areas of the law that have drawn much GOP criticism. The Donnelly-backed bill gained bipartisan support and has a good chance of

getting full Senate approval. Being part of an effort that brings together Republicans and Democrats on financial reform puts Donnelly right in the middle of what could become one of the major accomplishments of the two-year congressional session. Not only is Donnelly genuinely bipartisan, he's also got an authentic common touch. He connects with Hoosiers when he interacts with them. It's the characteristic that will make him tough to beat.

4. U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita: He and fellow Wabash College graduate Luke Messer are tangled in a sometimes vicious Republican Senate primary. Rokita might have a nominal advantage since he ran statewide twice as secretary of state in 2002 and 2006. Rokita's \$450,000 haul for the quarter was a mild surprise, given the fundraising firepower of Dan Dumezich, who is backing his campaign. Both he and Messer posted about \$2.4



million cash on hand. Rokita has been very aggressive, attacking Messer for living in Virginia while his wife has made a six-figure salary for part-time work for the city of Fishers. HPI columnist and former congressman Mark Souder analyzed the race in November, saying that Rokita had an “initial lead and other advantages so, unless the others act soon, he could have the nomination locked by the filing deadline.” He pointed to the Jennifer Messer angle, saying, “Whether that totally sinks Messer is unclear, but her employment is no longer an advantage, to say the least. Rokita supporters not only drew first blood, they may have hit the jugular vein.”

5. U.S. Rep. Luke Messer: You have to wonder whether Democrat Doug Jones’ upset win in the Alabama special Senate election has Messer, House Republican Policy Committee chairman, thinking that he might want to stay in the House and work his way up to speaker. But then again, Trump’s awful approval numbers and lack of political appeal beyond his base may have convinced Messer that the GOP will lose the House anyway and that it’s best to try to jump to the Senate. He rebounded from a disappointing second quarter by posting a decent \$735,000. Souder observed, “Messer’s biggest asset is that the Republican “establishment” – party chairmen, many top elected officials and major donors – support him. However, having the support of the “establishment” (a

malleable term at best) is not what it once was. In fact, it can be a millstone around one’s neck.” Messer rose to the Republican Conference chair, a seat once held by Pence and former Speaker John Boehner. Many saw Messer on a potential path to speaker, and with Speaker Paul Ryan’s exit likely sometime in 2018, Messer could be in a position to move up the food chain, though there has been nothing public to suggest he will opt out of the Senate race. HPI considers the Republican Senate primary a tossup at this juncture and things will heat up on Jan. 13 with a Congress of Counties joint appearance and a straw poll.

6. Speaker Brian Bosma: For the first time in his long tenure, Bosma lacks a commanding legislative priority. “There’s usually one overarching, bright shiny object that keeps attention focused. And it’s a little bit different this year,” he told reporters. “It’s OK. We’ll manage it. We’ll work through it.” A reminder: This state is facing teacher and workforce shortages, and an opioid epidemic that could swamp future budgets, both here and nationally. When super majorities meander, that is usually a precursor to a tipping point. Bosma could find himself at a conspicuous friction point. He is adamantly opposed to hate crime legislation, saying judges already have options to increase penalties. But a recent Public Opinion Strategies Poll for the Indiana Realtors reveals support for such legislation in the 70th percentile.



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7. Senate President David Long: He is steering his caucus into a new era after its two long-time fiscal managers, Luke Kenley and Brandt Hershman, resigned. Long has elevated Sens. Ryan Mishler and Travis Holdman to the two Appropriations and the Tax and Fiscal Policy committee helms, and the fact that this isn't a budget year should give both time to adapt to their new roles. Long will be under pressure on redistricting reform. The Senate has long been the deathbed for such reforms, and while Republican Sens. John Ruckleshaus and Mike Bohacek are sponsoring legislation that would create an independent commission, we'd be surprised if Long didn't snuff out the concept once again.

8: U.S. Sen. Todd Young: He has had a

workmanlike but undis-tinguished start to his Senate career. He serves on the Foreign Relations Committee, which has given him a platform to weigh in the fight against ISIS as well as many other hotspots around the globe like Yemen, where he coaxed the Saudis to end a blockade imperiling 20 million people with starvation. The Foreign Relations panel is one of



the best perches in Congress for achieving policy and legislative breakthroughs and establishing a good reputation. He's also made a point of working with Democrats to position himself as someone who can reach across the aisle to get legislation moving in the right direction. Many of his efforts, however, have revolved around soft bipartisanship – the easy layups that can increase a scoring average. Let's see if he steps forward one day at a crucial moment to forge a relationship with a Democrat that would truly start to change how Washington works. He's got a long way to go to reach the level of Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn. and chairman of the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee on which Young serves. Alexander has co-authored a bill with his Democratic ranking member, Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., that would provide insurance subsidies rather than leave in lurch low-income people who couldn't get coverage outside of Obamacare. Now that's tough bipartisanship.

9. National Intelligence Director Dan

Coats: If we could be privy to any private conversations on earth, it would be between old friends and allies Vice President Pence and Director Coats. Pence jumped at the opportunity to convert to Trumpism in the summer of 2016. Coats was expressing skepticism to HPI and the NWI Times about the future president well into the fall

campaign. Many believe that his taking the national intelligence helm was an act of vivid patriotism. Coats, along with Chief of Staff John Kelly, Defense Sec. Jim Mattis and National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster are widely viewed as the "adults in the room," pressing the infant president to stay within some semblance of norms. They face an epic challenge as the bombastic Trump seems most aroused when it comes to punishing North Korea, which could unleash the first nuclear war by two such powers in history. Coats has also had to withstand Trump's persistent criticism of U.S. intelligence agencies. To think that Trump's impugning the intelligence sector isn't offensive to Coats is an understatement. Some time, some day far away, we look forward to another of the many intriguing conversations we've had with our former senator.

10. Drug Czar Jim McClelland and FSSA Commissioner Jennifer

Walthall: One of Gov. Holcomb's first appointments was the drug czar and he along with Walthall have spent much of 2017 assessing the depth of the opioid crisis and developing regional treatment strategies, impressing the importance of county needle exchange and methadon programs. McClelland has been bluntly candid that Indiana, as well as many other states, are nowhere close to getting out of the woods. Walthall, along with Terry Stigdon at DCS, will all play critical roles in the opioid crisis.

11. Surgeon General Jerome Adams:

Last fall, President Trump declared a "national opioid emergency" and the former Indiana health commissioner will be the point man for the administration. Adams said he "has already spent more than \$800 million on prevention treatment and for Zaloxone for first responders. As surgeon general of the United States, the nation's top public health advocate, I'm focused on prevention and helping folks understand how we can prevent the start of addiction in our citizens." Former congressman Patrick Kennedy has suggested it may cost \$10 billion to fight the epidemic. Adams said, "The president has already asked for a significant amount of money in his pleas to Congress. Ultimately it's going to be up to them to decide how much they give us and how. But what we know is Congress isn't going to give us enough money to tackle this epidemic alone. It's going to take federal, state, and local efforts. It's why I'm trying to partner with the business community, with the law enforcement community, and bring all partners to the table." U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland noted that during the AIDS crisis President Reagan's Surgeon General C. Everett Koop sent letters to millions of Americans warning of the crisis. "The surgeon general can make an extraordinary impact," said Hoyer, D-Md., speaking next to Adams at a forum on opioids at the College of Southern Maryland. "My belief is that Surgeon General Adams will do exactly

that.”

12. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch: It is clear when talking with Gov. Holcomb and the LG that these two have formed a vivid partnership. The governor relies on Crouch to make his case to many legislators in both parties where she maintains vivid relationships. And Crouch has assumed the sprawling LG portfolio that extends from presiding over the Senate in session, to agriculture, to rural affairs, to homeland security. While she expresses great deference to the governor when it comes to 2024, there is little doubt that if she remains healthy, Crouch will make a play to break the state’s 200-year-plus gender glass ceiling.

13. State Sen. Ron Alting: The Senate Public Policy chair is the key player in Sunday alcohol sales and cold beer. He called the recent alliance by liquor stores a game changer, is sponsoring legislation on Sunday sales and as chair could kill any legislation he doesn’t like. Alting will face a challenge from Democrat Ivy Tech dean Sherry Shipley, who doesn’t appear to be ready to capitalize on the political opening. “I’m going to be honest, it kind of pisses me off that this is an issue I keep getting asked about, when we have all these other pressing issues,” Shipley told the Lafayette Journal & Courier’s Dave Bangert. “At first I was like, really, this is what I’m going to have to really think about? Listen, I don’t feel like he’s vulnerable. I really don’t. I didn’t get into it because I thought he’s going to be someone who’s easy to beat or that he’s who’s vulnerable.” If you wonder why Democrats are a super minority party, here’s your Exhibit A.

14. U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks: She is the resident adult in the Hoosier GOP delegation, a position she has wrested from Rep. Luke Messer who has sunk to the levels of political discourse necessary to attract votes in the GOP Senate primary and meet the challenge presented by his main opponent, Rep. Todd Rokita, who has slipped even farther down the silliness scale in his campaign. Brooks has the policy chops and political skill to excel in the House and beyond. She has one of the most thankless jobs in Congress as chair of the House Ethics Committee. But it’s also a position that demonstrates how highly her peers think of her. Her other assignment – on the House Energy and Commerce Committee – is truly a plum that gives her a platform to develop her policy skills. She has all kinds of potential. The question is when will the men who crowd the GOP gubernatorial and Senate fields step aside and give Brooks some room to run? She raised \$549,000 in the third quarter and had a \$1.49 million war chest and has yet to draw a credible challenger.

15. South Bend Mayor Peter Buttigieg: The two-term South Bend mayor is a rising star, but a number of Democrats see his interests nationally rather than at the Indiana Statehouse. He lost a statewide

race to Treasurer Richard Mourdock in 2010. Last year after announcing he was gay, he ran for the Democratic National Committee chair, dropping out on the morning of the vote despite some impressive endorsements. He has appeared in Iowa this past year and many believe he’d be more likely to seek the vice presidential nomination in 2020 as opposed to a run for governor. Hoosier Democrats could press him to run for governor if there’s no noticeable traction for anyone else this coming year.

16. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett:

The first term mayor commands the biggest local political base and has worked on some campaign promises, most notably his 4,000-street-light initiative. Over the holidays we published a 2020 Democratic governor speculation list.



Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett did not make our early cut, because of his “crime problem,” explaining, “He ran as a former DA tough on crime, and this year Indy sets a record homicide rate, on top of last year’s murder record.” Pressed by Fox59’s Russ McQuaid

on the past year and how he would grade himself, Hogsett responded, “I think that the grade is maybe a C+, B-. I wish things would happen faster than they do. I wish that we would have been able to add more officers quicker than we have been. I think we’re making progress. I wouldn’t want to give myself an A; you cannot give yourself a high grade whenever the number of criminal homicides still remains unacceptable, but I do think that a solid C+, B- is a good fair grade for the kind of progress that we’re making.” Is Hogsett a gubernatorial contender? In 1992 against Sen. Dan Coats Hogsett won 40% of the vote, 1994 in his congressional loss to David McIntosh he won 45% in a GOP wave election), and in 2004 for attorney general (39.9%) against incumbent Steve Carter. So he hasn’t run well statewide. And then there’s the mayor factor, which is that beyond Sens. Vance Hartke and Richard Lugar, big city Indiana mayors don’t fare well in statewide elections, right Steve Goldsmith?

17. John Sinder, Grant Monahan and Scot Imus:

The Association of Beverage Retailers (led by John Sinder) and the Indiana Retail Council (Grant Monahan) cut a deal backing Sunday alcohol sales while keeping cold beer in liquor stores. Scot Imus, executive director of the Indiana Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association, opposes the deal. “At the end of the day, it’s not the self-serving deal between the big-box stores and the liquor stores that’s the problem,” he said, “It’s the raw deal they are giving to consumers.” So these

are the key players at the Statehouse in the coming beer wars.

18. Mike Braun: The former Republican state rep from Jasper has dropped well north of \$2 million on TV and radio ads in the Republican U.S. Senate race. So Braun's name ID should be improving. He embraces President Trump, positions himself as an "outsider" and many political observers I've talked to think that he would create a tougher contrast for Sen. Donnelly than either Rokita or Messer, who have ceded any credibility on reining in federal spending and deficits. That's on top of the Obamacare repeal fiasco.

19. Secretary of State Connie Lawson: She is seeking a second full term. Her accomplishments include purging voter files, which she stresses were done by statute with a number of safeguards in place. Democrats will attack her on that, her Senate sponsorship of voter ID laws, and her membership on the shadowy Trump/Pence commission on vote fraud. Democrats have not announced an opponent, so it is unclear how credible a challenge will be. Traditionally GOP statewide do well, even in first presidential mid-terms, though in 2006 Rokita won reelection with a narrow margin.

20. Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer: Gov. Holcomb's right-hand political man has overseen a party that raised close to \$3 million in coordinated campaigns with Holcomb, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch and the state party. Hupfer has also worked to improve the party's technology edge, which he believes played a crucial role in Trump's 19% plurality in 2016. Party events have been well-attended, so the perception is that things are hitting on all cylinders. The wild card is President Trump, who has seen his job approval in Indiana fall to 47% approve, 51% disapprove in the POS Poll last November. And 41% "strongly disapprove." Trump and Pence have vowed to return to Indiana to campaign against Sen. Donnelly. If a wave election year develops, it will be interested to see if that's a boon for Hupfer, or a complication.

21. Democratic Chairman John Zody: As noted above, this is a crucial year for Zody and Indiana Democrats. In his HPI Interview in December, he said he

held 15 town hall meetings across the state in 2017 with more than 600 attending. The party is on the verge of creating its version of the "Lugar Series" and has been actively training aspiring female candidates. "So at the end of the day we trained over 1,000 people, we recruited more volunteers, there were tens of thousands of new registered voters in Indiana," Zody told us. "Our fundraising kept up. We increased our social media presence. This was the year to organize." He believes the groundwork has been established for the party's comeback. Should a wave develop, he believes Democrats can end GOP super majorities in the General Assembly and, perhaps, pick off

a congressional seat or two. If Democrats can't make inroads this year, or if Sen. Donnelly loses, they stand to fade as a viable major party. So much is at stake in 2018 for this chairman and his party.



Hammond Mayor McDermott (top), Evansville Mayor Winnecke, and U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski.

22: House Minority Leader Terry Goodin and Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane:

These two leaders are the General Assembly point men on ending the Republican super majorities in the House and Senate. Goodin was elected in December to replace Scott Pelath and has been working on fielding candidates in as many House districts as possible in order to take advantage of the wave. Goodin is a rare Democrat, representing one of the few rural districts. Some believe he has the template down to help Democrats rebound beyond the urban counties and college towns. Lanane has been working to field credible candidates and has done so in close to 10 districts. These leaders will use the upcoming General Assembly to provide contrasts, push for hate crime legislation and redistricting reform, and hold Holcomb's feet to the fire on the

Department of Child Services.

23. Evansville Mayor Lloyd Winnecke: The second-term Republican is leading a downtown renaissance that includes a new land-based casino, hotel complex and medical school. He will find himself in the political spotlight next June when Evansville becomes the second city outside of Indianapolis to host the Republican State Convention.

24. Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr.: The four-term Hammond mayor is ambitious and antsy. He is clearly ready for a new challenge and has

pondered challenging U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, a move many Democrats see as a political suicide mission. McDermott has been a successful mayor, guiding Hammond into the most-populated-city status in Lake County. His use of casino revenue to fund college tuition for residents is seen as one of his greatest successes, creating a better-educated constituency and a stable housing market. He was Lake Democratic chairman, but gave up the position. McDermott would have to fend off the Lake County corruption reputation, but he has run a clean city hall.

25. U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski: The third term Republican looks to be a fairly decent shape heading into an uncertain 2018 mid-term election. She posted \$992,000 raised in the third quarter with \$696,758 cash on hand. She faces a likely challenge from Democrat corporate executive Mel Hall, who moved into the district and filed no report for the third quarter. While the Cook Partisan Index lists the 2nd as a +12 Republican district, historically it has been very competitive in mid-term elections. Should a wave develop, the 2nd could come into play. Walorski's unwillingness to debate or hold town halls is indicative of how fragile she perceives her own political position.

26. U.S. Rep. Trey Hollingsworth: He is also off to a low-key start in his first term. The 9th CD Republican caught a break when he was placed on the House Financial Services Committee, which is a terrific assignment when it comes to fundraising. He'll be able to bring in plenty of campaign cash from Wall Street interests. A Financial Services seat is sort of an insurance policy for Capitol Hill freshmen. On the panel, Hollingsworth has written a couple of bills designed to ease the regulatory burdens on small companies when they raise capital. At hearings and markups, the youthful-looking Hollingsworth comes across as a combination of a policy wonk and an earnest former student body president. He once said that Hoosiers in the 9th district have told him that they want Congress to change their lives in "material ways." Hmm. "Material" sounds more like a word that a financial executive – or regulator – would use. Perhaps Hollingsworth will become a Financial Services populist. He raised \$574,762 in the third quarter and posted \$249,428 cash on hand. As we know from 2016 when he won the open seat, his family has deep pockets, investing more than \$2 million as he won a crowded primary and then easily prevailed in the general. He will likely face either civil rights attorney Dan Canan of New Albany and Liz Watson, a Bloomington attorney. Both raised more than \$200,000 in the third quarter and had \$130,000 and

\$169,000 cash on hand. Like the 2nd, the 9th could come into play should a Democratic wave develop.

27. U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon: The "doctor in the House" raised \$325,628 in the third quarter and posted \$412,015 cash. He will likely face Terre Haute attorney William Tanoos, who raised \$80,036 and posted \$57,486 cash. Of the three traditionally competitive districts in Indiana, Bucshon is probably in the best shape to withstand a Democratic wave. When many Republicans shied away from town hall meetings, Bucshon has conducted several and has received high marks for his willingness to face tough questions from constituents.

28. IEDC Director Jim Schellinger: As Gov. Holcomb's IEDC wingman, he was there when the legislative agenda was unveiled and observed that a record 164 commitments from companies to locate committed more than \$5.4 billion in expansion plans and 18,000 new jobs. These jobs are expected to pay nearly 33% more than the state average. So the former Democratic gubernatorial candidate is on a roll, with 2016 and 2017 both record investment years. The key question is, can Schellinger help Holcomb land the epic one, the Amazon HQ2?

29. Christina Hale: She now heads Leadership Indianapolis after her LG nomination in 2016 and two terms in the Indiana House where she was an activist on female and children issues. She is seen as a rising star and spent 2017 organizing several partisan and non-partisan groups as well as recruiting women to seek office. She has been active on the J-J circuit and has kept a conspicuous public speaking schedule. "I'm sure I've been the hardest working non-candidate in 2017," Hale explained. Some Democrats have approached her to run for secretary of state or 5th CD in 2018, but she prefers to stay on the gubernatorial track. The key question there is whether she goes in 2020 or, more likely, waits for a potential open seat in 2024. Like Republicans did in 1999 with McIntosh, activist Democrats may appeal to her to run, particularly if no one else finds traction.



Ways & Means Chairman Tim Brown with U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon (left).

30. Rod Ratcliff: The CEO of Centaur Gaming has literally transformed the state's equine racing sector and gaming. Centaur Gaming, is a home grown, privately held, Indiana Company founded in 1993 with headquarters in downtown Indianapolis. They have additional properties in Shelbyville, Anderson, Indianapolis, Clarksville and New Haven. The company currently employs more than 2,000 team members who

have earned more than \$475 million in wages, tips and benefits since 2008 and prides itself on having a focus of supporting other Hoosier companies through their purchasing and procurement procedures. Since 2008, the company has spent \$416 million with other Hoosier companies of which \$117 million was with minority and women-owned businesses. Ratcliff has always kept the focus on horse racing and by doing so turned Hoosier Park in Anderson into the premier standardbred track in the nation as evidenced by the 2017 hosting of the prestigious Breeders Crown and made Shelbyville's Indiana Grand Race Track into one of the top thoroughbred tracks in the nation. The success of Indiana's horse racing program is felt in each of Indiana's 92 counties through breeding, training and other programs such as the county fair racing program. Ratcliff frequently opines that while the track and facilities in Anderson and Shelbyville are beautiful and very important, the true economic success story of the Indiana horse racing story is being told every day at the breeding farms and training facilities scattered throughout each of Indiana's 92 counties. This statewide equine economic impact was last estimated well in excess of \$1 billion annually by Purdue



University. Centaur is being bought by Caesar's, so we may be witnessing the exit of an impactful businessman who played by the rules.

31. Brian Burton: The president of the Indiana Manufacturers Association is quietly working to recalibrate the state's economic priorities. Indiana's manufacturing sector accounts for 29% of the state's GDP (or \$98.4 billion), tops in the nation and well ahead of Kentucky and Michigan at 19% and Ohio at 17%. Indiana ranks sixth in manufacturing GDP (following California, Texas, Ohio, Illinois and North Carolina) and leads the nation in GDP per capita. And Indiana ranks second in manufacturing job creation since the near auto sector collapse in 2009 with 104,400 jobs, trailing only Michigan (156,000). The total employment for the sector is 535,426 in June 2017. Workforce issues prompted Toyota and Mazda to pass on a combined plant in St. Joseph County. While Gov. Holcomb is focused on these workforce issues, the biggest component exists in the manufacturing sector.

32. Kevin Brinegar: While the IMA is stressing its state leading strengths, Indiana Chamber President and CEO Brinegar will be pushing STEM education that benefits the tech sector. The Chamber is focused on software-as-a-service tax exempt status, longterm water management issues, smoking cessation and "meaningful

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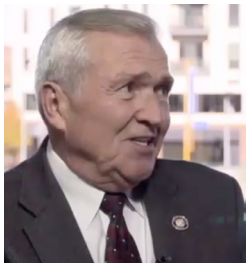
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township reform” that will focus on unit mergers in low population areas. “We’ve done so well recently from an employment standpoint that we’ve almost outstripped our ability to hire skilled workers since unemployment is so low in the state,” Brinegar said on Wednesday. “It’s clear we need to raise up the skills of those who are here, but the Indiana Chamber is also suggesting that perhaps we need to pursue a parallel strategy of recruiting people from out of state. Talent is more mobile than ever before and once people get here, they really appreciate our cost of living.”

33. Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry:

The third-term mayor has been concentrating on reinventing its “point of destination” downtown, while Indiana’s second largest city is humming on a job sector that features distribution, advance manufacturing, health care and high tech defense sector. Henry points to the Parkview Field and Harrison Square complex and expansion of “The Landing” public gathering place that is fueling an array of public/private partnerships. Along with Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard, Henry has also taken a stance on climate change, reacting to President Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris climate accords, saying, “I am deeply concerned about President Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord. Climate change greatly impacts our quality of life and economic well-being. Despite this setback on the federal level, our local efforts to improve our environment will continue.”



34. Purdue President Mitch Daniels:

The former governor keeps pushing the horizon, whether it’s the launch of the Purdue PolyTech High School in Indianapolis to the purchase of Kaplan University to extend the school’s online reach. Daniels has been a persistent advocate to contain student costs and he’s delivered.

35. Ways & Means Chairman Tim

Brown: With Sens. Kenley and Hershman gone, Dr. Brown becomes the General Assembly’s senior fiscal leader, holding that position since 2012. While this isn’t a budget session, as the state works through a teacher shortage and rural school funding issues, Ways & Means will play an important role in mitigating some of these problems this session.

36. State Sen. Ryan Mishler and State Sen. Travis Holdman:

After close to a generation of Sens. Luke Kenley and Brandt Hershman chairing the Senate appropriations and tax and fiscal policy portfolios, the torch has passed to Mishler and Holdman. This is an extraordinarily rare transition. Prior to Kenley and Hershman in 2005, both portfolios were handled by the legendary Sen. Larry Borst for all but two years since 1970. Since this isn’t a budget year, Mishler and Holdman will have some time to settle in.

37. Jay Ricker: The CEO of Ricker’s Convenience Stores became the poster boy for cold beer when his company exploited an 80-year-old loophole and began selling cold beer at convenience stores in Columbus and Sheridan. The General Assembly shot those down last session, and Ricker has vowed to push for alcohol reforms, insisting that legislators were literally picking “winners and losers.” Ricker has also suggested that he might get involved in elections of legislators who block the reforms that will be debated this winter. Don’t be surprised if the Rickers burrito truck is parked outside the Indiana Statehouse between now and March.

38. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky: The dean of the Indiana delegation, representing the 1st CD since 1985 when he defeated incumbent Katie Hall. Visclosky is expected seek a 17th full term and many Democrats



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don't believe he is vulnerable to a primary challenge. He had been a defender of the domestic steel industry. His Marquette Plan to redevelop the industrial south Lake Michigan shore is about to achieve national park status, a crowning achievement for one of the more impactful members of Congress in modern Hoosier history.

39. U.S. Rep. Jim Banks: He comes the closest of any Hoosier Republican to drawing a line of demarcation between himself and Trump. He has criticized some of Trump's wayward comments about and haphazard approaches to foreign and national security policy. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, he has developed his own sensibility on those issues with a level of thoughtfulness and maturity that was not expected from someone who many thought would be a right-wing firebrand in the mold of his predecessor, former Rep. Marlin Stutzman. Banks is by no means a moderate. But he has shown glimpses of the ability to be more than a House conservative who wants to tear the house down. He could become a policy leader. The freshman Republican has plunged himself into Indiana's defense sector, spending his first year in Congress visiting dozens of military bases and defense contractors. His goal is to seek more contracts for the defense sector that has seen a contraction of investment. He is also concerned about another wave of base closures, and will be a voice when it comes to Crane, Muscatatuck, Atterbury, and Air Force facilities at Fort Wayne and Terre Haute. Entering Congress as a vivid conservative, he has surprised some by not joining the Freedom Caucus. Banks raised \$321,813 in the third quarter and posted \$268,873 as Democrat Courtney Tritch of Fort Wayne is preparing a challenge, raising \$88,000 in the third quarter with \$70,044. The 3rd CD is one of the most Republican in the nation, and while Tritch is seen as a credible candidate, it would have to be a historic wave to take out Banks.

40. U.S. Rep. Andre Carson: The Indianapolis Democrat has emerged as a Trump counterpoint during this era of Muslim travel bans and efforts to repeal Obamacare. Carson is one of just two Muslim members of Congress, so he has become a go-to source for cable news reacting to a number of the Trump initiatives.

41. Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight: If his wife, Kelly, weren't battling Huntington's disease, Goodnight would in one of the best positions to run for governor in 2020, which is unlikely at this point. He inherited Kokomo City Hall in 2009 as the domestic auto industry teetered and his city faced an existential crisis. The Kokomo of today is one of a robust and rebuilding downtown, a new baseball stadium, a free city bus service, along with a reduced municipal workforce and little debt. Horse Race Status: Unlikely, but we include Goodnight because he might be another candidate who is urged to

get in if circumstances align.

42. Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness: Indiana's newest city and mayor are following Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard in a city makeover. Fishers is now home to IKEA and is in the process of remaking its inner core. And Fadness is making a pitch for the Amazon HQ2. Fadness cites 1,550 new jobs and \$200 million in investments in 2016. He points to job creation and the city's AAA bond rating, but acknowledges with the rapid growth, the city faces critical traffic issues.

43. Supt. Jennifer McCormick: The first-year superintendent finds herself at odds with key education sectors. In December, she voted no when the State Board of Education approved what Indiana Public Media described as a "controversial rewrite" of high school graduation requirements. "When we pass policy that is a little sloppy, it makes me nervous. I don't appreciate it as a taxpayer and I don't appreciate it as a parent," McCormick said



after the vote. Jeff Butts, president of the Indiana Association of School Superintendents, sided with McCormick, calling the new recommendations "irresponsible" without cost analysis and input from districts. McCormick has also sounded alarms on the emerging ILEARN system, telling WIBC that the change is happening too rapidly. "We know, just for the assessment alone, we may be looking at \$10 million, and I'll be honest, the Department (of Education) just does not have that kind of money in our assessment account. And we did not count on that expense." Another huge area of concern is a teacher shortage created by a lack of flexibility in licensing exams and hiring standards. "The teacher shortage is real," McCormick said as she released her 2018 legislative priorities. Another priority is funding concerns from local school districts. McCormick said the department will also use the next year to look for ways to help financially distressed school districts facing enrollment decline. "When you have such decline and your hands are tied... it becomes even more difficult," she told the IndyStar. "So you have fixed costs, you have no flexibility and then all of a sudden you're saying, 'We can't make payroll.' Well, no kidding."

44. Mike O'Brien: The campaign manager of Gov. Holcomb's unprecedented 2016 campaign remains in the inner circle and has via twitter become the conscience of the party, sometimes in the face of President Trump's more extreme observations and denunciations.

45. Earl Goode: Gov. Holcomb's chief of staff runs a tight ship on the second floor, aided and abetted by

deputies Jane Jankowski and Danny Lopez. After serving six years as Gov. Mitch Daniels' COS, he is probably the longest-serving person in that position.

46. Bill Hanna: The president and CEO of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority has been a consensus builder for one of Gov. Holcomb's favorite infrastructure projects, the South Shore double-tracking as well as the Westlake Corridor Expansion. A number of HPI subscribers urged us to include Hanna on this Power 50. "He worked tirelessly with all levels of government and continues to do so on these projects," said Ice Miller's J. Sebastian Smelko. "He builds support across party lines. Without him, these projects do not get off the ground. Furthermore, the rail is a merely portion of the overall economic development strategy in the area as transit-oriented development will be a focal point of the Region with the RDA working closely with the local units of government."

47. East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland: The mayor has been a steady partner with Gov. Holcomb, Rep. Visclosky and an array of state and federal sources to get a handle on his city's lead contamination crisis that displaced 1,000 residents. When Holcomb asked for a to-do list and costs, Copeland put the price tag at \$52 million. He's worked on this crisis without a lot of fanfare, but solutions appear to be closer.

48. Attorney General Curtis Hill: The new Republican attorney general is widely seen as a

divisive presence in the Statehouse and has been willing to buck Gov. Holcomb. The two are not on the same wave length on the legality of CBD oil, which Hill has released an opinion deeming the product illegal. WTHR-TV's Bob Segall asked Gov. Holcomb whether CBDs, which contain no THC, are legal. "Absolutely. Absolutely," the governor replied. "So CBD oil will still be bought and sold in the state of Indiana." Hill has bucked Holcomb on needle exchange programs in counties and declared most drug addicts as unable to rehabilitate.

49. Nick Ayres: Vice President Pence's chief of staff is the key gatekeeper and strategist. He has taken some controversial stances, leading the charge against Republican Sens. Dean Heller and Jeff Flake (a former close Pence friend) during the Obamacare repeal saga. But the former RGA wunderkind is the key cog in PenceWorld.

50. Club For Growth President David McIntosh: The former Indiana congressman and 2000 gubernatorial nominee plays a key role for one of the most wide-spending conservative organizations and PACs. Once Hoosier Republicans settle on a U.S. Senate nominee, expect McIntosh and the club to steer a significant amount of funds into the race. This is a departure from 2012, when another former Hoosier congressman, Chris Chocola, backed Richard Mourdock against Sen. Richard Lugar. They won the primary, but lost the war. McIntosh doesn't appear to be prepared to play a role in the GOP primary. ❖

Photography With Punch
Mark Curry On Indiana Politics
mark1tcphotography@gmail.com
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The collage includes several photographs: a man at a podium with a 'TRUMP' sign, a woman with red glasses, a man in a suit, a woman with glasses, a man in a suit, a man holding a 'LEGALIZE SUNDAY' sign, a woman in a blue jacket, two men in suits, a man in a suit, and a man in a suit.

Rep. Lawson won't seek reelection

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — State Rep. Linda Lawson (D-Hammond) today formally announced her retirement from the Indiana House, where she has served since 1998. Lawson will complete her current term as representative of the 1st House District (which covers most of Hammond and all of Whiting), but will not file for re-election. "I have so many wonderful memories of the Indiana General Assembly and those who have served with me," Lawson said. "In particular, I am proud of the work I did on the House Judiciary Committee, which I chaired for six years. The work that we [as a committee] put in was astounding."



Mishler proposes school funding fix

A bill has been filed that would close a hole in the state's education budget, keeping the state from cutting millions from public schools (Herron, IndyStar). Sen. Ryan Mishler, R-Bremen, filed SB189 to allow the state Budget Agency to transfer money from the State Tuition Reserve Fund to offset a reduction in schools' state funding as a result of actual enrollment counts exceeding the enrollment projection estimates. A similar provision already exists in instances where a high demand for private school vouchers would cause a funding reduction for public schools. "I've been in school funding for 10 years and this is the first time we've underestimated (the student count)," Mishler said.

Long announces caucus changes

Indiana Senate President Pro Tem David Long (R-Fort Wayne) announced additional changes to Senate Republican leadership and committee assignments triggered by the retirement of Sen. Brandt Hershman (Howey Politics Indiana). According to a press release, changes are as follows: Sen. Liz Brown (R-Fort Wayne) joins the leadership team as the Assistant Majority Floor Leader for Parliamentary Affairs. She replaces Sen. Rodric Bray (R-Martinsville), who was named Majority Floor Leader following Hershman's retirement; Sen. Greg Walker (R-Columbus) becomes the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Tax and Fiscal Policy; Sen. Chip Perfect (R-Lawrenceburg) fills the vacancy on the Senate Committee on Tax and Fiscal Policy and relinquishes his membership on the Senate Committee on Appropriations; Sen. Mike Crider (R-Greenfield) fills the vacancies on the Senate Committees on Appropriations and Rules and Legislative Procedure. He relinquishes his membership on the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Natural Resources; Sen. Randy Head (R-Logansport) fills the vacancy on Legislative Council and Legislative Council

Technology Oversight Subcommittee. Once appointed, the new senator representing Senate District 7 will serve on the Senate Committees on Agriculture/Natural Resources, Commerce and Technology/Utilities, and Local Government.

Democrats call for DCS hearings

An email from the Indiana Senate Democrats indicated Senate Democratic Leader Tim Lanane (D-Anderson) reiterated Sen. Tallian's call during the State Budget Committee for legislative hearings into the funding and operations of the Department of Child Services. "There is no more urgent or important matter than the protection of our children," Sen. Lanane said. "The legislature must investigate how we are funding the Department of Child Services to ensure our children are adequately cared for."

House Dems reveal agenda

Indiana House Democrats have unveiled their list of priorities for the 2018 legislative session (Brown, Inside Indiana Business). The caucus says it will focus on initiatives to "improve the lives of Hoosier families, bring needed election reform to our state, and find answers to the troubled state Department of Child Services." House Democratic Leader Terry Goodin (D-66) said in his opening remarks Wednesday the caucus would seek increases to the state minimum wage, support the concept of equal pay for equal work, and work to protect communities from the opioid epidemic. Goodin says Democrats will also seek to establish an independent commission to oversee the drawing of legislative and Congressional districts. He says the goal is to change a growing belief that Indiana has turned into "a state where the lawmakers select their constituents, rather than the other way around."

Ruckelshaus seeks wage hike

An Indiana Senate Republican wants to reward businesses with tax credits when they raise pay for their minimum-wage workers (Colombo, IBI). State Sen. John Ruckelshaus of Indianapolis has introduced a bill that would provide a credit against state tax liability for employers of minimum-wage workers that give raises to their workers after those workers complete a training program that would improve their education level or skills. Ruckelshaus said Senate Bill 15 is designed to incentivize businesses to help their minimum-wage workers move up the economic ladder.

Holdman seeks more baby boxes

State Sen. Travis Holdman (R-Markle) announced Senate Bill 123, which would expand the availability of newborn safety incubators, commonly referred to as "baby boxes." Keeping with Indiana's Safe Haven law, Holdman introduced SB 123 to expand the use of baby boxes in Indiana by allowing fire departments staffed 24/7 to install baby boxes. Currently, there are only two in Indiana. ❖

A Republican and Democrat talk

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – For the final time in 2017, Ralph the Republican and Donald the Democrat met Friday to sip coffee and argue politics at the place they meet almost every weekday morning. Ralph, there first, shouted a greeting as Donald headed to their usual table.



R: Happy New Year, Donnie. Should be happy, what with our Republican Congress giving you a big tax cut.

D: Yeah, Ronnie, with the deductions they're takin' away, maybe there'll be enough to buy a bagel here some morning.

R: Guess you don't know economics. All the cuts gonna get the economy booming, more jobs, more money for everybody.

D: Well, Ronnie, I know that trickle-down stuff never works. Look at what the Bush tax cuts did.

R: If you wanna talk about failed economic policies, how about Obama? Slow recovery.

D: Glad to look at how Obama saved us from another great depression.

R: Obama slowed the economy with all those regulations. President Trump is getting rid of them all.

Just then, Susie, their favorite waitress came with coffee.

S: Heard the magic word, "Trump." So, off on your usual disagreement. Like every morning this year.

D: Well, Susie, Trump, with his stupid tweets and crazy actions, gives us terrible stuff to talk about every day.

R: OK, some of that is nutty. But Trump shakes things up. And look at the results. He got a tax cut. He's scuttling Obamacare.

S: I'm getting' out of this. I'll get your bagels.

D: Ronnie, why can't you see that Trump threatens constitutional rights, promotes hatred, hurts the environment and sucks up to Putin?

R: Putin? There you go again. You Democrats are still on the Russia collusion witch hunt. Sooner he fires that Mueller the better. Did you hear what Sean Hannity said about Mueller's biased investigation?

D: Of course not. I never watch the Trump propaganda network.

R: Right, Donnie, you just watch fake news, like on CNN and MSNBC. That's where you get junk about threats to constitutional rights. One morning you even

quoted that Rachel Maddow about Russian stuff.

D: Course I did. She showed that a lot of stuff in that dossier about Russia having stuff on Trump looks like it's true.

R: If you believe that, you probably think our president isn't putting America first.

D: Right.

Susie brought their bagels and quickly escaped.

R: Hey, I heard a good riddle. What do you get when you offer a liberal a penny for his thoughts? Change.

D: Well, I heard one on TV about Trump. What's the difference between God and Donald Trump? God doesn't think he's Donald Trump.

R: At least we can still joke.

D: Yeah, even if we do steal our material from TV. But there's nothing funny about that huge deficit in your tax-cut bonanza for the super-rich. Adds like \$1.5 trillion to the national debt that our kids and grandkids will be stuck with.

R: Not so. You'll see. We don't want more deficit for more spending like you Democrats. This is deficit for more prosperity. And that'll actually end up bringing the deficit down.

D: If you believe that, you probably believe corporations will use their windfall to hire more workers and raise pay.

R: Right.

Susie was back to pour more coffee.

D: Susie, I'm doubling my tip today. I want to share my happiness. I'm just so happy that we'll eventually get rid of Trump, maybe in '18, but for sure after he runs for reelection – if he dares to try.

R: I'm doubling my tip, too. That's because I'm so happy about the tax cut Trump signed. He's got seven more years.

S: Thanks, guys. I appreciate your tips. I'm happy that you two, despite your differences, always meet and talk and even joke. You're not like bitter partisans in Congress. Happy New Year. ❖

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

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

The future of the U.S. looks very bright

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – As promised, after my melancholy and negative last column, I sit here on this bone-chilling New Year’s Eve and offer you my reasons why the future of the United States looks bright. As I mentioned in my previous column, I am an optimistic person both personally and professionally and I can state categorically that this tome will be much more fun to write.



What is out there on the horizon that gives me hope that our country is knocking on the door of a tremendous renaissance that hasn’t been seen for at least 20 years? My view is that a variety of factors are coming together nicely to act as rocket fuel for our future prosperity.

First, despite what the liberal talking heads in the media, coupled with the Chuckie, Nancy and Bernie Trio might say, the

Republican tax reform legislation recently passed is going to knock the economic ball out of the park. There was so much in the legislation to like.

United States business will no longer have to compete against the world with a two-ton weight around our ankles. The reduction of the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21% will instantly enable our corporations to compete from our shores and not be forced to ship jobs, plant and capital overseas. For decades we’ve sat and watched while foreign competitors ate our lunch and decent paying manufacturing and intellectual capital jobs have seeped from our country. Over \$6 trillion of corporate profits have accumulated overseas just waiting for the opportunity to supercharge American business. There is an adage in the investment business that money goes where it is treated best. Now, the flight of corporate profits to the likes of Ireland broom closets will stop and American corporations can get down to earning real profits and not just paper shuffling earnings boosts.

In addition to the new corporate tax rates, there is a special one-time overseas profit repatriation tax rate of 15.3% that should go a long way toward bringing back most of the corporate cash stashed overseas. This repatriated cash is going to be spent in one of several ways, all good. It will be paid out in the form of dividend increases. This benefits shareholders with higher income or through increases in their retirement fund balances.

It will be used to buy back stock. This will increase the value of the remaining outstanding stock. This is great for investors in all type of equity accounts. It will be used to pay higher wages and benefits. This increases the incomes of everyone up and down the corporate ladder. Recent an-

nounced wage increases provide verification of this.

It will be used to increase charitable giving. Higher education, scholarship funds, social services agencies and medical facilities and research will all benefit. Recent corporate announcements provide verification of this. These are the dollars that will keep on giving and will prime an economic pump that will keep the prosperity flowing for years to come.

Tax reform also gave a huge chunk of change back to the working men and women of this country. This increased money in the American workers’ pockets will be put to use in ways that will spell nothing but good news. The American taxpayer knows best how to spend their own money and will do so with vigor.

Tax reform legislation also kicked a leg from under the shaky Obamacare stool. Make no mistake about it, Obamacare was a failing proposition from the start. Left to its own devices, the massive healthcare scheme would have eventually imploded. That being said, removing the individual mandate or the Obamacare tax has greatly accelerated the implosion. For good or bad, Republicans now own responsibility for creating a better and more affordable healthcare system. The pending collapse of Obamacare coupled with the 2018 elections may serve as a pretty good motivator for Congress.

Tax reform legislation also carried the message that the United States is going to continue to pursue energy independence. The ANWAR, once a sacred cow, has now been opened up for energy exploration. Oil prices should continue to remain in check with the amount of energy resources being developed here at home. This should be good news to anyone who fills their gas tank, definitely the lower and middle income citizens who have learned over the years that high gasoline prices are the ultimate in regressive taxes.

Finally, in regard to the tax legislation. It was heartening to note as Republican senators and representatives gathered at the White House for their victory lap that there was a look on many faces that signaled, “Hey, you really mean we can pass legislation if we stick together?” Mitch McConnell looked like he could command. Ryan looked forceful. I’m hopeful that this new Republican unity will extend into 2018 and go to work for healthcare, immigration, infrastructure and entitlement reform. What a plus that would be!

Next on my list of reasons for optimism for the future is the improving health and readiness of our military. We may have rising challenges with Russia, China, North Korea, Iran and lesser states, but we are still the undisputed military super power in the world. From the lowliest private to the grandest aircraft carrier, you don’t mess with the United States military. A commander-in-chief who says what he means and means what he says partnered with the best military in existence gives rise to a renewed confidence that the United States can meet any challenge.

Another reason for my 2018 optimism is that it just doesn’t seem that political tension could get any

worse than in 2017. Really, could the media hate President Trump any more than they already do? Could press coverage be any more negative against Trump in 2018? Could Rosie O'Donnell have a bigger cow? No, no and no!

The winds of change may also blow in Robert Mueller's Russian investigation. From a mantra and focus of Trump colluding with the Russians to derail Hilary's victory celebration, to the focus of investigations turned back toward the Clinton campaign, the president may emerge from the shadow in February and discover that his political winter is finally finished.

I also look for many of our domestic political divisions to begin to moderate for a variety of factors. I've noticed a drop off in the intensity of bitterness displayed by both parties on social media. Whether it is combat fatigue or just a return to some modicum of civility, you have to like the trend. It doesn't help the anti-Trump crowd when virtually all of their spokespersons have been outed as either serial sex abusers or enablers. The pots are no longer calling the kettle black.

The improving employment and wage conditions of the Trump economy have proven to be a wave that has lifted all boats. Overall unemployment is at historical lows. Workforce participation is at record levels. Hispanic unemployment is at an all-time low. Black unemployment is at a 10-year low. Personal income is increasing. The best part is that all of this has occurred before the benefits of tax reform have been seen. It should only get better from here. Employed people making good wages are ending much of our social divisions in this country. Happy, employed people just don't cause riots and mayhem.

Finally, my biggest reason for having an optimistic outlook for the future of the United States is the same today as it has been for my entire life. As long as a man or woman gets up in the morning and goes to work for a company that pays them a decent livable wage, the company prices their products or services at a profit, government at all levels allows the worker and the company to keep a reasonable amount of their earnings, the workers spend their earnings and save some for the future, and the corporations invest in their future and share profits with their shareowners, then the long-term health and wellness of our economy and our nation will be unchallenged.

Important in this process is the continued expression of our beliefs whether in the press, in social media or on a street corner. Maintaining our basic freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, association and of the press will guarantee our continued success as a nation. Maintaining a culture that emphasizes life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is, has been and will be all we need to remain what President Reagan referred to as "The shining city on the hill." ❖

Dunn is the former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party

Focus will be on Lake County sheriff race

By **RICH JAMES**

MERRILLVILLE – With the advent of the new year, politics quickly took center stage in Lake County. And while it is a big political year, particularly on the county level, much of the focus will be on the Democratic primary for sheriff.



The sheriff's office dominated politics last year with the conviction of Sheriff John Buncich on public corruption charges involving kickbacks on towing contracts. Buncich will be sentenced later this month.

Upon Buncich's conviction, a host of candidates began lobbying Democratic precinct committeemen for the right to fill the remainder of his term.

County police officer Oscar Martinez won the precinct caucus last fall and now will have to face the electorate in the May primary election. And there will be challengers – perhaps many of them. One who has been campaigning heavily since the precinct election in Schererville Police Chief David Dowling, who finished second in the caucus.

Martinez isn't resting on his precinct victory. Martinez, in an unheard of move by a sheriff, bought full-color billboards across the county over the holiday season. Featured on the billboards was Martinez himself in full uniform cautioning county residents to have a safe holiday season.

Martinez won the caucus with the support of county Commissioner Mike Repay and Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott. Repay earlier in the year ran for county Democratic chairman and tied with James Wieser. Buncich, who was the outgoing chairman, broke the tie by selecting Wieser.

Besides Dowling, also planning to run is Richard Ligon of Gary, a retired postal inspector who has become a perennial candidate for sheriff. Ligon, who is black, could hurt the chances of Mike Brown, the popular county clerk who may run for sheriff because of term limits. Brown, too, is black.

Dan Murchek, who was deputy chief under Buncich, is expected to run, just as he did in the caucus. Highland attorney Thomas O'Donnell may get in the race and former Sheriff Roy Dominguez also has talked about it.

How involved McDermott gets in the sheriff's primary remains to be seen.

McDermott's clout in county politics continues to grow. His wife, Marissa, was elected circuit court judge in 2016 largely because of her husband's popularity. McDermott may go after two of the longest serving county officials. Auditor John Petalas and Treasurer Peggy Katona

are both seeking reelection and likely will retire four years later if they are successful.

Long-time state Rep. Charlie Brown of Gary won't be seeking another term. Instead, he has said he will run for the county council. Brown said that will allow him to stay in public service without having to drive to and from

Indianapolis each week. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune.

Indiana's earnings deficit data explored

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Where was the latest U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) personal income report for Indiana? I didn't see it in my newspaper. It didn't even make a press release from the governor's office or the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). Perhaps all the attention was drawn to the tactless tax tacks stuck by Congress into voodoo dolls representing the American people.



So what were the numbers? U.S. personal income in the third quarter of 2017 grew at an annual rate of 2.72% nationally; for Indiana the figure was a shade lower at 2.67%. Since both round off to 2.7, Indiana can claim to be right close to the national

growth rate and snugly at 21st place among the 50 states.

Hey, that's not bad. We'll always rejoice when we're in the top half of the states. Further, we were in the middle of our neighborhood, below Michigan and Ohio, but above Illinois and Kentucky.

Working with data is like taking photographs. We zoomed in to look at Indiana in a single quarter of a year, then we enlarged our frame to take in neighboring states. But we can also go deeper into the subject and examine a component of personal income – earnings, what people make working for themselves or others.

The annualized national figure for earnings growth in the third quarter of 2017 was 3.3% while Indiana recorded 3.1% growth. Although we're skating close to the national track, we ranked 32nd in the rate of earnings growth. Worse yet, we found ourselves behind each of our four neighboring states.

Opening out now to a longer view shows, over the past 10 years, employee compensation in Indiana grew slower than in the U.S. as a whole. Our compensation, or wage bill, grew by 2.4% annual rate with the nation ahead

of us at 2.7%. In other words, if Indiana's public and private employers had matched the wage and employment growth of the nation, Hoosier paychecks would have been approximately \$5.4 billion larger in 2017 than actually realized.

The reasons for this earnings deficit are as numerous as those explaining a football team's lack of success. How often have we heard, "We didn't have the right quarterback? We don't have enough skilled players. Our playbook is out of date. Our training facilities are inferior to those of other places. A tradition of success is not ours. We don't attract the more talented players. Our communication on the team is weak. Some players think only of themselves and not the success of the team."

Unfortunately, the solutions to economic problems are not as simple as the quandaries of football. The time scale and the complexities of relationships are broader than those in football. Furthermore, football requires an opposing team to lose. In economics, our competitors don't have to lose for us to win. ❖

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

Bosma open to med pot study

INDIANAPOLIS – Republican opposition to legalizing marijuana for medicinal use may be softening (Rudavsky & Cook, IndyStar). While it's not likely that such legislation would be approved this year, the Indiana General Assembly this session could edge a little closer to one day legalizing medical marijuana. Rep. Jim Lucas, R-Seymour, has said he intends to introduce legislation that would legalize marijuana for medical use. And in an unexpected move, House Speaker Brian Bosma, who has stated his opposition to medical marijuana in the past, said that he would be open to at least studying the issue. "Honestly my opinion about the advisability hasn't necessarily changed but my opinion as to whether or not we need to study the issue likely has. Our own surgeon general called for a study of the issue," he said. "So I think we need to take a look at the effects and I support a study." ❖

Dave Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier:

Here's a story on a Sunday morning as you lament not going out Saturday to get champagne and other party supplies for New Year's Eve ... because you forgot we live in Indiana and the liquor stores are closed. Back in May, as the dust was still settling on one more failed attempt to fix Indiana's antiquated laws on cold beer and Sunday retail alcohol sales, veteran political reporter Brian Howey came knocking, looking to see how the issue was playing in Lafayette. Particularly, Howey wanted to know whether state Sen. Ron Alting was as vulnerable on the issue in his Lafayette hometown as the Republican seemed to be at the Statehouse, where he has held considerable sway over what alcohol sales bills get heard. Do you get the sense that Alting – first elected to the state Senate in 1998 and barely challenged since then – might be vulnerable in the 2018 elections, Howey wanted to know. It was an interesting question at a time when headlines – “Statehouse admits its alcohol problem,” among them – were hovering close to Alting, long seen as someone who seemed content in the face of mounting public pressure to leave the system the way it was: No retail sales on Sundays and cold beer in package liquor stores only. I gave Howey my best guess. Alting's center-stage role, as chairman of the Senate Public Policy Committee, in the Sunday sales/cold beer debates were no secret back home, where sentiment in favor of alcohol-law reform likely tracked ahead of the rest of the state.

But Alting's profile in and around Lafayette, I told Howey, was hardly defined by it. Still, when Howey wrote about our conversation in May, he couldn't help wondering about “a district that includes Purdue University where an issue like cold beer might find traction with Boilermaker students, along with a constituency that includes Democrats who also align in the (state Rep. Sheila) Klinker camp.” Could a powerful player left out of past Sunday sales/cold beer debates – perhaps Jay Ricker, CEO of Ricker's, who saw his convenience store cold beer sales workaround shut down at the Statehouse in 2017 – be ready to fund an Alting challenger? So, here we are, days from the Jan. 3 start of the 2018 General Assembly session – one that will feature Senate Bill 1, an Alting-authored effort to allow retail alcohol sales from noon to 8 p.m. on Sundays – and 11 months from Election Day. We're also a little more than a week removed from Democrat Sherry Shipley's entry into the Senate District 22 race, after she dropped out of a crowded field vying for the 4th District seat in Congress. Is Shipley ready to pick away at Alting and make him pay for any past foot-dragging on Sunday sales and cold beer? Shipley gave a heavy sigh on the other end of the line. “I'm going to be honest, it kind of pisses me off that this is an issue I keep getting asked about, when we have all these other pressing issues,” Shipley said, rattling off questions about Indiana's opioid crisis, life-and-death matters in the Department of Child Services and state mandates for public education. “But I keep get-



ting asked about cold beer and Sunday sales,” said Shipley, a dean at Ivy Tech Community College's Lafayette campus. “At first I was like, really, this is what I'm going to have to really think about? Listen, I don't feel like he's vulnerable. I really don't. I didn't get into it because I thought he's going to be someone who's easy to beat or that he's who's vulnerable.” ❖

Tim Alberta, Politico: They had been tight for two decades: Both ran conservative think tanks in their states in the 1990s; both were elected to the U.S. Congress in 2000, at one point occupying neighboring offices; both were lonely leaders of intraparty rebellions during the big-spending tenure of President George W. Bush; both left the House of Representatives in 2012 to run successfully for statewide office; above all, both strove to be regarded as gentleman conservatives, known for a personal decency that infused their relationships and reputations in the nation's capital. And yet both men knew, after one fateful week in July 2016, that their friendship would never be the same. The reason: Donald Trump. On a Thursday afternoon, one of these men, a junior senator from a Western state, found himself locked in a tense verbal confrontation with Trump. The presumptive GOP nominee was visiting Washington, D.C., to meet with Senate Republicans, and the niceties came to a sudden halt when Trump singled out one of them—Jeff Flake—for having criticized his candidacy. Exactly one week after that showdown—nearly to the minute—reports surfaced that Trump had selected Mike Pence, the former congressman and then-governor of Indiana, as his vice presidential running mate. Pence would soon be whisked from Indianapolis to New York, where he was introduced over the weekend, before being formally nominated alongside Trump at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland the following week. Flake had not planned to attend. But Trump's pick of Pence—which, Flake tells me, left him in a state of “shock”—forced him to reconsider. He wouldn't just be turning his back on Trump and the Republican Party by shunning the convention; he would be betraying one of his closest friends. Ultimately, it wasn't enough to change Flake's mind. He stayed away from Cleveland, in protest of Trump—while his old pal Pence was crowned as his heir apparent. The ascent of the 45th president has left a wreckage of relationships in its wake—neighbors, friends and families divided along lines of partisanship if not political philosophy. The parting paths taken by these two elected officials tell a story bigger and more compelling than just their own. Both witnessed mounting anger and anxiety in the country—especially in the party's base—and felt compelled to act. Yet they ultimately allied themselves with radically different approaches: one viewing the nation's disquiet as a problem to be solved, the other viewing it as a political advantage to be exploited. ❖

Holcomb orders DCS audit

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb said Wednesday that a consultant would audit the Indiana Department of Child Services following criticism by the former director that the agency was underfunded and plagued by meddling from the governor's office (Miley, CNHI). The consultant, The Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group, made its first visit Wednesday to state offices, Holcomb said. "I'm going to turn this card face up," Holcomb said in an interview with CNHI News Indiana. "I want to know what the answers are because ... we found funding north of half a billion dollars, in addition to what the department had requested." The audit can be used to compare agency costs and effectiveness with similar agencies in other states, Holcomb said. "It's not just what we're spending, it's what we're getting for that, and are we spending it in the right place so it gets to children. This is about the health and the welfare of the children of our state, and I don't know of anything more important for us to get right."



Messer calls for med device repeal

INDIANAPOLIS — U.S. Rep. Luke Messer (R-IN) called for the upcoming government funding bill to include the repeal of Obamacare's medical device tax, a news release stated (Howey Politics Indiana). The medical device tax was passed as part of Obamacare and imposes a 2.3 percent excise tax on all medical device sales. In 2015, Congress voted to delay the tax for two years and this week, the tax went back into effect. "Obamacare's medical device tax is bad for Hoosiers and must be repealed," Messer said. "This tax halts innovation, prevents expansion and freezes hiring in Warsaw, Blooming-

ton, Mishawaka, Indianapolis and other Hoosier communities."

Penalties remain for CBD oil sales

INDIANAPOLIS — Civil cases against dozens of Indiana businesses cited for selling CBD oil will remain open while state lawmakers decide whether to legalize the product, according to the chairman of Indiana's Alcohol and Tobacco Commission (WTHR-TV). We're going to have to wait and see what the General Assembly does," ATC chairman David Cook told WTHR Wednesday morning. "Everything is on hold until such time we have a determination from the legislature about the legality of CBD oil." The chairman's comments come just days after he personally called about three dozen business owners across Indiana to tell them his agency made a mistake.

Former Dem 3rd CD treasurer guilty

FORT WAYNE — A former treasurer of the 3rd Congressional District Democratic Party has pleaded guilty to stealing money from the political organization (Francisco, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette). Tyler R. Cooley, 33, entered a guilty plea last month to a felony charge of theft in Kosciusko Circuit Court. Cooley, of Markle, could face up to a year in prison as part of a plea agreement with the county prosecutor's office. Sentencing has been scheduled for Jan. 22, according to court records. The 3rd District Democratic Party accused Cooley of stealing more than \$7,000 after an internal audit.

Trump to sue Michael Wolff

TERRE HAUTE — Amid the firestorm over Michael Wolff's forthcoming book "Fire and Fury," a lawyer for President Trump says legal action

against Steve Bannon is "imminent," accusing the former White House aide of breaking a confidentiality and non-disparagement agreement he had signed with the Trump campaign (Axios).

Trump disbands vote fraud panel

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is dumping a controversial commission that was charged with investigating his unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud during the 2016 election, the White House said Wednesday (Politico). Trump asked the Department of Homeland Security to look into the issue instead. "Despite substantial evidence of voter fraud, many states have refused to provide the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity with basic information relevant to its inquiry," a statement from the president said. "Rather than engage in endless legal battles at taxpayer expense, today I signed an executive order to dissolve the Commission." The commission was the focus of heated contention even before it was formally announced in May with Vice President Mike Pence as the chairman and Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach as vice chairman.

Wray, Rosenstein visit Speaker Ryan

WASHINGTON — Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and FBI Director Chris Wray made an unannounced visit to Speaker Paul Ryan's office Wednesday as the Justice Department grapples with an increasingly hostile faction of House Republicans demanding documents related to the bureau's Russia probe (Politico). Rosenstein was spotted entering Ryan's office, and a spokesman for the speaker confirmed that Rosenstein and Wray had requested the meeting. A second person familiar with the meeting said it was related to a document request issued over the summer by House intelligence committee chairman Devin Nunes.