

# Rokita will have big debate decision

He's ducking the debate commission event on April 30, but late polling could change decision

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Sometime in mid to late April when Todd Rokita's penultimate internal polls come in, or perhaps those from Marist or Survey Monkey are published, the congressman and Republican U.S. Senate candidate will face a Shakespearean decision: To debate or not to debate?

His political career could be hanging in the balance.

Last Friday the Indiana Debate Commission announced that Luke Messer and Mike Braun would participate in the April 30 Republican Senate event. Rokita, said IDC President Gerry Lanosga, would not. But on Monday,



Rokita seemed to leave the door open to participate. It could be a game-time decision.

Lanosga did not hide the IDC's disappointment that Rokita might be the first senatorial or gubernatorial

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## Taking back the Senate

The Making of the Modern State Senate Pro Tem: Part 3

By **TREVOR FOUGHTY**

INDIANAPOLIS – As covered in Parts 1 and 2, from Indiana's founding in 1816 until the "Black Day" of the General Assembly in 1887, the lieutenant governor served as the State Senate's true presiding officer with the Senate president "pro tempore," or pro tem, infrequently playing a bit, ceremonial role.

When Republican Pro Tem Isaac P. Gray used his limited power and political cunning to essentially trick Democrats into ratifying the 15th Amendment, he made lifelong enemies in



**"I had a long speech, but I'm not going to give it. I'm honored that some of you thought I'd made a difference. We get so much more done in state government, so much more than the federal government."**

*- Senate President Pro Tem David Long's final sine die*



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the Senate Democratic caucus. That didn't change, even after he became a Democrat himself and was elected governor. Gray's 1886 bid for the U.S. Senate, an office, at the time, selected by the state legislature, not the Hoosier electorate, led to an escalating political chess match between the Democratic governor and his rivals in the Democrat-controlled State Senate that culminated in the physical beating of a Republican lieutenant governor on the Senate floor and the ensuing Statehouse riot that lasted for four hours.

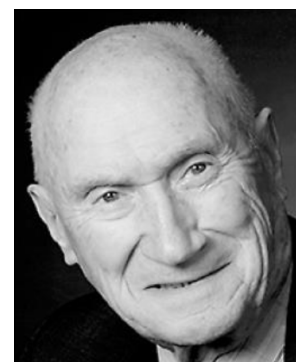
**Ultimately, Gray** would not only lose his Senate race, he would lose his political career: He earned the nickname "Sisyphus on the Wabash" after being nominated for vice president at the Democratic National Convention in 1888 and 1892, losing the floor vote both times after stories of his "Black Day" involvement were told. The 1887 riot had greater national implications than just a Hoosier also-ran at a party convention: It built momentum behind the nascent countrywide movement to directly elect U.S. senators and led to a series of related U.S. House resolutions in the 1890's and, ultimately, to ratification of the 17th

Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1913, which took the election of U.S. senators away from state legislatures.

The other bit of fallout from this ordeal is that from 1888 onward, the first matter of business each session for the State Senate majority was to elect a president pro tem to serve for the entire session. No longer would they wait for the lieutenant governor's absence to spot-fill the position. The political pressure the majority party could exert on a lieutenant governor regarding committee assignments and legislation was now acutely known. With the majority united behind a single member who served as spokesman for the party (and, more importantly, who easily could serve as presiding officer), lieutenant governors of the opposite party had little choice

but to seek the input of the pro tem on matters of running the chamber or risk being denied a seat on the dais. Lieutenant governors of the same party had more leeway, but took input from the pro tem all the same for the sake of party unity. The lieutenant governor was still technically in control of the chamber, but the pro tems were asserting themselves for the first time.

This arrangement seemed to work well for the better part of the 20th Century, but the power balance was slowly shifting, especially when the pro tem and lieutenant governor were from different parties. Ironically, while lieutenant governors who belonged to the majority party ostensibly had more control, it was an intra-party fight between Republicans, coupled with some massive reforms to how In-



Lt. Gov. Dick Folz (left) and former Senate President Pro Tem Phil Gutman.

diana state government operated, that ultimately proved to be the breaking point of this arrangement.

**The 96th** General Assembly that met in 1969 sent to the voters three constitutional amendments to begin reorganizing state government, one amendment for each branch. The legislative branch amendment would allow the General Assembly to meet annually instead of every other year, with a "long session" in odd-numbered years so that the state budget could be completed, and a "short session" in even-numbered years to keep up with modern demands. Unlikely as it may seem given the historic nature of potentially passing three constitutional amendments at once, perhaps the most consequential bill for the State Senate was that year's budget.

Near the end of the session, Republican Lt. Gov. Dick Folz had to name conferees for the budget bill. Folz, a first-year rookie who had never served in the legislature, ignored the input of Pro Tem Allan Bloom and Finance Committee Chairman Joe Harrison and named his own conferees to the bill. This blatant disrespect for what was by now a long-standing tradition of pro tem prerogatives rubbed many senators the wrong way, chief among them Phil Gutman.

**That summer, Gutman** started making phone calls to his colleagues, teasing the idea of a concerted campaign to "let the Senate run the Senate." Voters were on the verge of modernizing the legislature by adopting a constitutional amendment to allow annual sessions; perhaps the rules needed a bit of modernization as well, especially if the lieutenant governor wasn't going to respect the traditions that accompanied them.

On Nov. 3, 1970, voters approved all three constitutional amendments, with the legislative branch amendment passing by a 14% margin. Two weeks later, on Nov. 16, Senate Republicans met to choose their first leader of this new era. Gutman had spent a year and a half rounding up colleagues for his pro tem race with the slogan "Take Back the Senate."

But, it wasn't a message embraced by all; his opponent was Les Duvall, who ran in part to defend the honor of Lt. Gov. Folz, and probably felt compelled to do so since he was one of the two Republican budget conferees Folz had appointed that led to the showdown. When the dust settled, Gutman bested Duvall by a single vote, 15-14.

At a Senate caucus a week later, Gutman made good on his campaign pledge, introducing a new set of Senate rules that stripped the lieutenant governor of all his powers save those granted by the Constitution: He could preside over session and cast tie-breaking votes. It was now officially a ceremonial position as far as the legislature was concerned, consolidating all meaningful power in the chamber with the pro tem.

**But, the humbling** of the office was not yet complete. With no real legislative responsibilities left to speak of, some saw no need for the position to be elected on its own, so the 97th General Assembly passed yet another constitutional amendment requiring the lieutenant governor to serve as a true running mate to the governor. The 98th General Assembly concurred and voters approved the measure in 1974. In the span of just four years, the lieutenant governorship lost its legislative duties and then lost its independent spot on the ballot.

Perhaps the greatest irony in the whole affair was this: In addition to Duvall, the other Republican budget

conferee that Folz had selected was Bob Orr. As a result of that one move by Folz, Orr would become the first lieutenant governor never to have true legislative authority when he was elected in 1972, and Orr would become the first lieutenant governor forced to run on a joint ticket in 1976. (It is worth noting, however, that Orr, with the necessary support of his superior Gov. Otis Bowen, and through his own gubernatorial support of John Mutz, transformed the lieutenant governor's office into the modern administrative workhorse it is today.)

The first decade of this new arrangement saw three pro tems breeze through. Gutman retired from the legislature after six years in the post. Bob Fair, the only Democrat to serve as a modern pro tem, lost the support of his own party just months into the job after he was viewed as being too soft on Gov. Bowen's budget (one Democratic committee chair gave a floor speech in which he called his own pro tem "arrogant ... pompous and sanctimonious"; he only stopped when a Senate Republican, John Mutz, invoked Senate rules against impugning the motives of another senator). Martin "Chip" Edwards underscored the literal meaning of "pro tempore" by the end of his term, shuttled off to a federal prison sentence, having been indicted on bribery charges midway through his second year and convicted on multiple counts by year's end.

**It's not surprising**, then, that by 1980 many wondered if a mistake had been made. The new power structure seemed too unstable, too prone to legislative abuse, and too open to influence peddling (a fear further stoked in 1982, when an IRS investigation into Edwards also ensnared Gutman, who himself was convicted on two counts of extortion related to his time as pro tem).

But, little did anyone know that the election of Bob Garton in 1980 would bring about the longest period of stability the chamber has ever known, a stability that would continue even after he surprisingly lost his 2006 primary (normally a harbinger of chaos) and when David Long was chosen as his replacement.

Ditto for the advances in transparency both men have made, first as a response to the corruption scandals of Edwards and Gutman, and later as the state entered the era of the internet. And so in 2018, as people contemplate Long's place in the annals of pro tem history upon his pending retirement, it's notable that the widespread concerns of 1980 are gone. Far from a desire to go back to the old system, most observers today assume the current arrangement has always been the natural order of things.

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Senate President Pro Tem Robert Garton with Sen. David Long. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

# Long's final sine die ends a 12-year run

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – A dozen years after it began, Senate President Pro Tempore David Long's final sine die speech followed dozens of impassioned tributes late Wednesday afternoon from both sides of the aisle.



"I had a long speech, but I'm not going to give it," Long said, dry-eyed. "I'm honored that some of you thought I'd made a difference."

Just moments before, he had heard a tribute from State Sen. Mike Delph, who provided some of the rare riotous moments during his helm of the upper cave of winds.

Delph won a caucus, then heard initial advice from Long, who won the top spot in 2006 after the primary election defeat of predecessor Robert Garton.

"Do you know what you believe?" Long asked Delph, quickly followed by advice. "If you don't know what you believe, you will be taught what to believe by the hallway."

Delph had clashed with Long during the two years of the constitutional marriage amendment battles. "We've had good days and not so good days," Delph said in understatement. "We've had days where we brought the best out of each other, we've had days where we didn't bring out the best."

Of Delph, Long observed, "It's been an interesting relationship. I love the guy but he's a mess sometimes. He's smart as a whip, he goes off, he's just so focused sometimes that he can drive you crazy. He's a good man, a good person, a great dad and a good senator."

State Sen. Mike Young provided some historical perspective on how rare it is that a legislative leader simply gives up power and walks away in modern Indiana.

**Speakers J. Roberts Daily** and Michael K. Phillips were defeated in general elections. Garton was dispatched in a primary. Speakers Paul Mannweiler, B. Patrick Bauer and Brian Bosma watched their majorities lost in electoral waves.

Only Long and Democratic Speaker John Gregg in 2002 walked away on their own terms.

Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane compared himself and the pro tem to "Mutt and Jeff" and recalled an initial observation: "There's a guy I can look up to. There's a guy I have to look up to. He's always been a leader. I

learned serving with him over the time that David Long has a profound sense of fairness for what is right for people."

Long said in a speech lasting more than 15 minutes where he thanked staff and the doormen, "People don't understand the Senate. It's such a small group of people who get to serve here. And it's an incredibly important job and we are lucky to serve here, we really are. It's an honor to serve here and it's a responsibility to serve here.

**"We don't always agree.** We have great people here on both sides of the aisle, but we find a path. We're not always happy. Sen. Tallian gives me the hairy eyeball every year," Long said with a laugh. "We have a responsibility to keep this economy humming. It's not easy. The world is changing so fast and it's tough for us to stay ahead of it, but try we must. The great challenge going forward is that we don't muck it up or get in the way too much because things are changing so quickly and for the better in many ways."

Long compared the General Assembly to Congress. "We get so much more here done as a state body than they'll ever do in the federal government," he said, unknowing that the session would end in bedlam about seven hours later when time ran out. "We affect Hoosiers



on an everyday basis so much more than what goes on in Washington D.C., thank goodness, by the way. Because we know it's dysfunctional and has been for many years. I'm a state's rights guy for that reason. I'm fed up at times with their inability to do what's best for the country. But that really is not a bad thing because the responsibility is increasingly coming to the states. And when it comes to the states it comes to leadership and that means this group here in this room. I have great confidence you're up the the task, but it is going to be of great importance for each of you to take up that challenge."

Long added, "I'd like to thank Gov. Holcomb, who I really enjoyed getting to know. He's a great guy to have a beer with. I think the state's in good hands and am really grateful for that because you never really know what you're going to get. Sometimes a governor is a box of chocolates and you don't know. But this guy's going to be a good one."

Long announced in February that he would retire after the November election, setting off what will likely be an intense battle to succeed him with Sens. Mark Messmer, Travis Holdman and Rodric Bray preparing to seek the post.

**His tenure will be marked** by a good economy and one of the best business climates in the nation. He corralled various factions into a cohesive chamber. David Long leaves power with a universal perception of respect.



# Despite sprawling portfolio, Crouch gavels

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Over the past three weeks, contributing HPI columnist Trevor Foughty has given us a fascinating perspective on the evolution of the Indiana Senate president pro tempore as well as the lieutenant governor, dating back to a Statehouse riot over the two offices in its first year of use in 1887.

The government reforms of the late 1960s and early 1970s went from Unigov in Indianapolis to a trio of constitutional amendments that spanned all three branches of Indiana government. The real change occurred in late 1970 – about the time I was paging for Speaker Kermit Burrous as a high school student from Peru – when the notion of “let the Senate run the Senate” took hold, essentially stripping the lieutenant governor of any real power. A few years later, the office was dropped as a stand alone office on the ballot and like president and vice president, a true ticket of governor and lieutenant governor went to the voters in 1976.

Since then, in my three decades of covering the General Assembly in some capacity, I’ve watched Lt. Govs. Bob Orr, Frank O’Bannon, Joe Kernan, Kathy Davis, Becky Skillman, Sue Ellspermann and, very briefly, Eric Holcomb, spend hours at the Senate podium, gaveling in bills up for debate with rapid-fire rhetoric.

And now, it’s Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch. Appearing at our Brown County Broadband Task Force event in Nashville last October, Crouch was introduced and she was candid. “One of my many duties of responsibility, the one that I enjoy the most, is being president of the Indiana Senate.” She glanced over to Sen. Eric Koch seated nearby, and added with a smile, “As a member of the Indiana House for eight years, it is so gratifying to finally be in charge of these senators.”

**The line drew a big laugh.** There is a significant duty in the Senate for the LG, that of breaking a tie. But those rarely come up without plenty of warning.

But what struck me about this event was Crouch’s introduction where her portfolio was laid out: She heads the Indiana Department of Agriculture, Office of Housing and Community Development, Office of Defense Development, Office of Community and Rural Affairs, Office of Tourism Development, and chairs the Counter Terrorism Task Force.

That is a sprawling and important portfolio.

And these are not inconsequential offices. They intertwine through key economic sectors of agriculture,

defense and tourism. There are urban housing issues. And that last one on counter terrorism is a critical cog in our security.

Just in the past couple of years, we’ve seen some major challenges come up within the portfolio, from the lead crisis at an East Chicago public housing project to a hemorrhaging of jobs and commerce from the defense sector which has been hammered in this era of sequester because Congress isn’t doing its job. Both U.S. Reps. Jackie Walorski and Jim Banks have told me they view the atrophy of Indiana defense sector jobs with a significant amount of alarm and concern.

**To Crouch’s credit,** she and Gov. Eric Holcomb certainly stepped up with East Chicago after the Pence administration essentially ignored the crisis. The general perception across the Statehouse is that Crouch has staffed her spheres of influence with credible and talented public servants.



Just last week, Crouch assembled key legislators to discuss issues with Office of Defense Development. “We have a number of assets in Indiana that support our defense industry, from federal and state installations to industry vendors and suppliers. Indiana has had a strong part in the safety and welfare of our national security,” Crouch said. “I believe we can do more, and we must start fighting to attract more defense assets and investments to the state, not just work to keep what assets we have. Indiana’s low cost of doing business and capacity for increased defense-related activities keep us well positioned to expand and grow our defense industry.”

One could make the case that Crouch could spend a majority of her time on agriculture, defense and counter terrorism concerns, particularly after we watched a spate of school threats result in dozens of arrests since the Parkland, Fla., massacre, and now a potential wave of international responses to President Trump’s tariffs.

**Govs. Mitch Daniels,** Mike Pence and Eric Holcomb, none of whom had General Assembly experience prior to entering that office, relied heavily on Lt. Govs. Skillman, Ellspermann and now Crouch (who all came from the legislature) to help formulate legislation, strategies to get bills passed, and have been eyes and ears on the ground. Perhaps, for that reason alone, the hundreds of hours each year justifies the LG’s presiding over the Senate.

Allies of Lt. Gov. Crouch see her as more engaged with legislators behind the scenes than some of her recent predecessors, creating dealmaking opportunities. That creates a buy-in with legislators, who believe they are helping to guide policies the various agencies in Crouch’s portfolio. Crouch has also hired a full-time parliamentarian, Rebecca Kasper (pictured), who also serves as her general counsel.

An observer noted, “She believes you’ve gotta show up to earn legislators’ respect and she does that by spending long, long hours presiding over the Senate.” ❖

## Rokita, from page 1

candidate to skip a debate. "We are very pleased that two candidates have agreed to this debate, but we are equally disappointed that one has opted to decline," Lanosga said. "A contested primary should be heavily vetted by Hoosier voters and not by partisans, party officials or special interest groups."

**In Rokita's view**, the IDC is packed with members of the liberal media elite, few of whom will even vote in the Republican primary. The debate will be shown on that liberal PBS, the very network Republicans repeatedly vow to defund. The debate moderator, Abdul Hakim Shabazz, is the IDC's "patsy," he said. Rokita explained on WIBC's "Hammer & Nigel Show" on Monday, "It's not about Abdul. I like Abdul personally, but he is not neutral. Let's not mistake that. Abdul is a never-Trumper. He was begging Kasich to primary Donald Trump. Part of what this primary is about is determining who is going to be [Trump's] best ally."

Rokita is taking a huge risk on this one. The campaign believes that the elite and "mainstream" media are the only ones hyperventilating about him being the only senatorial and gubernatorial candidate in the IDC's 10-year existence to skip a debate. In a number of conversations with Republicans this past week, HPI couldn't find a single one outside of Rokita's camp who thought his decision was a good one.

Rokita's own internal polling (along with Messer's) show more than 50% of likely Republican primary voters are undecided. By April 30, there could still be 10 or 12% in that category. Even if it has settled in the lower single digits, informed and reliable campaign sources tell HPI internal polling by two of the campaigns finds the trio of candidates tightly clustered, poised for a repeat of the 1998 GOP Senate primary when winner Paul Helmke, John Price and Peter Rusthoven ended up within a couple of percentage points of each other.

If Rokita doesn't show up, that will be a multiple news-cycle story line, obscuring issues and running from the Monday debate to Indiana Week in Review and many weekend columns and local political talk shows.

**Messer campaign manager** Chasen Bullock reacted, saying, "This primary is an audition for the strongest candidate to defend the Trump-Pence agenda without making mistakes. Todd Rokita's campaign knows he's a weak debater, gaffe-prone, and with too much public exposure he'll likely destroy his own campaign. Hoosiers should know, Todd Rokita doesn't have what it takes to beat Democrat Joe Donnelly."

Braun's campaign, with a growing perception of momentum after three months of heavy TV and radio advertising, was silent on the matter, a factor that should be unsettling to Camp Rokita.

Rokita said he will participate in a debate hosted by WOWO's Pat Miller and sponsored by the Allen County

Republican Party, while turning down another April debate where he deems the moderator insufficiently conservative. He said that "four or five" TV stations are planning to broadcast the WOWO debate around the state.

Rokita said that the PBS stations will have "terrible" viewership and then seemed to leave the door open that he might participate, saying, "Those ratings are going to be so terrible as it is, maybe I will go spice it up."

**Horse Race Status:** Tossup ❖

## The pawn shop and Hooters debate

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – It was my second reelection campaign for Congress. My Democrat opponent worked hard, but was unknown, underfunded and inexperienced. In other words, if you were the incumbent, a seemingly perfect candidate.



Then came the first televised debate. My challenge was to stay on message while my opponent wandered, trying to capitalize on the fact that I was reliably controversial. Then, as I prepared to answer the moderator's question I heard Mark Wehrle conclude his answer by stating that Souder brought "pawn shops and Hooters to Fort Wayne."

This came not only as a shock to me, but also to most viewers who thought of me as rather "Amishy." In other words, not a Hooters guy and probably not even a pawn shop person. In fact, the only time I had been in Hooters was in Indianapolis while working for Sen. Dan Coats. We were looking for a television to see Dan live on the early news. Sharon Soderstrom said "there's one," we stepped inside the door, watched and left. That was my experience with Hooters, prior to the congressional debate.

But now here I was. I turned directly to my opponent and said, "You have no clue what being a congressman is about." But debates aren't just about the debate.

**Victor Locke of WPTA-TV** always knew an attention-getting line when he heard it. Our next debate was actually a pre-taped, sit down with him (Locke) which would be aired on a Sunday morning with perhaps somewhere between five and 17 voters watching. Except that WPTA developed a promo that asked, "Did Souder bring Hooters to Fort Wayne? Tune in Sunday morning for the 4th District congressional debate" or something like that. And they promoted it in prime-time, reaching tens of thou-

sands of people with each ad. It was the lead question in that debate, which was otherwise totally forgettable.

But even this is not the end of the story. The Fort Wayne News-Sentinel then endorsed me with an editorial pointing out that I did not bring Hooters to Fort Wayne. Some felt that I was going to get blamed for bringing it, but now lose what residual gain I was going to get from those who liked the place.

**Candidate debates** are in some ways like an Indianapolis 500 race or a hockey game: Perhaps you remember the winner, or maybe a goal, but you definitely remember the crashes and the fights. Without wrecks and brawls, they mostly seem to go by at a fast rate of speed and in rather repetitive fashion.

The candidate debate that established many of the core principles of televised political debate was the first Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960. 1.) Kennedy looked young and vigorous (though actually had Addison's disease) and Nixon old and tired (Kennedy was 43, Nixon 47). The key word is "looked." 2.) Wear make-up (my favorite make-up story was one time before going on FOX News in Washington, an older make-up lady whispered to me that she had formerly done Nixon's make-up – I tried to stay calm) and 3.) It doesn't matter if you won on debate points to those listening on radio. In other words, who cares about substance?

Yet those who strenuously advocate debates act like they are the savior of public discourse and add intellectual weight to political campaigns. Among the chattering classes, of which I am now part, debates will be a major subject until May 8. Congressman Todd Rokita, by having the audacity to refuse to participate in what is being called the traditional debate, has justifiably made debates a bigger subject than they otherwise would have been.

**I understand the stated** reasons that Rokita gave in turning down this particular debate, beyond his silly whining about the moderator. Republican internal campaigns don't need the same outside refereeing that fall campaigns do. The Republican nominee should debate Sen. Joe Donnelly in different formats in different locations. A primary is different. But politics also constantly evolves. As elections become more canned, and more candidates are more or less just "hired guns" who don't reside in their home communities, what protections do voters have against getting some version of Weekend at Bernie's?

And, frankly, skipping a debate at the end of a race, in this day and age, looks like a candidate has something to hide, even if they don't. It lends itself to a specu-



lative attack – what is he hiding? – and, if something is charged, the claim gains significant credibility because it logically appears that the absent candidate was afraid to face the truth.

Of course, Rokita is also right that debate panelists feel pressure to ask what many candidates view as "gotcha" questions (we candidates have a much broader definition of what constitutes a "gotcha" question). Ironically, the more candidates become distant visual images and don't live among us, the more pressure the media feels to play the image of an inspector general.

**Unfortunately**, most reporters today have to rely on hearsay, actual "fake news" or the traditional, possibly fake news generated by planted information from supporters of opposition candidates. Unfortunately, any true "gotcha" moment likely will not come from any investigation, but from tripping up a candidate with a question.

If this is Rokita's concern – that he is ahead and could get tripped up with a mistake – he may replace Congressman Luke Messer as the official "acting like he's the incumbent" candidate. Furthermore, these debates are mere warm-ups for the main event against Sen. Donnelly, who has survived many such gut fights and is still correctly viewed as a nice guy for a politician. Why should Republicans choose a candidate, in a race as important as this one, who is afraid to even debate other Republicans?

The irony is that Mike Braun continues to increase his chances as a threat to win. He looks hungry and determined to win, as opposed to playing the traditional politics of incumbency. He looks like he wants to fight for people, taking on all comers, not afraid of voters and hiding out in Washington behind his controllers. Braun may not be polished in a debate, but he doesn't have just marbles or clichés in his mouth. Well, at least not all clichés.

The upshot of the debate decline is that Rokita is likely going to have to reverse his debate decision or both congressmen may lose. It reinforced claims that he is a control freak, and potentially puts his lead at risk.

**Donnelly is the incumbent.** He is running like he's still a challenger. You'd expect his challengers to be doing so as well. Rokita generally does, but backing away from a debate is out of character and exposed his fear of making a mistake. Voters want to see that you know that you work for them, not the other way around. They want to see how you hold up under maximum pressure.

In a three-way primary race there might be room for one "incumbent-pretender" to win the nomination, but not two of them. And not in 2018. ❖

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

# Messer runs 2nd ad; AFP aims at Donnelly

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Luke Messer began airing his second campaign this morning.

“[Teamwork](#)” is themed on the NCAA men’s basketball tournament and will run through March Madness. Messer coaches his son Hudson’s fifth grade basketball team. “I get teamwork. That’s why I back President Trump’s agenda: Tax cuts, pro life and funding for our troops,” Messer says in the ad.



The ad highlights Messer’s strong support of the Trump agenda on three key elements: Messer’s support for tax cuts, which Sen. Joe Donnelly voted against; Messer’s support for life; Trump has been called “the most pro-life president in history” by Vice President Pence; Messer’s vote to fund our troops, which both Republican opponents said they would not have done. The ad also includes a nod to Messer’s plan to fix the broken Senate. “Today the U.S. Senate is blocking our president. I’m running to shake up the Senate so we can save our country before it’s too late,” Messer says in the ad.

## AFB aims at Donnelly

A second wave of Americans For Prosperity TV ads will begin today. The ad will “hold Sen. Donnelly accountable for no votes on tax reform.” AFP-Indiana is in the process of investing more than \$2 million in ads against Donnelly, using tax reform as the key issue. It is part of a \$4 million campaign aimed against Donnelly and Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill.

In the [Indiana ad](#), a small business owner named “Cathy” shares how the tax cuts are allowing her to invest in her business. “Sen. Donnelly just doesn’t realize the impact that these tax cuts have on the everyday person, and the everyday business. Joe Donnelly let Hoosiers down,” Cathy says.

The Donnelly campaign released a fact check on the ad Wednesday afternoon. “Despite focusing on medical care, the latest ad from the Koch-backed Americans for Prosperity ignores that many major health insurers are receiving billions of dollars in new tax breaks,” the campaign said. “However, despite profiting, those same insurers are poised to wipe out

any gains from middle class Hoosiers when they raise health care premiums by double digits to account for GOP sabotage of our health care system. An analysis from the non-partisan Tax Policy Center has shown that any gains to Americans earning between \$50,000 and \$75,000 will likely be negated when other factors like premium hikes are included.”

The Donnelly campaign noted: “Last week, the Washington Post reported on a new study that claimed Indiana had a ‘high marketplace risk’ of premiums rising by as much as 50% by 2021. It placed much of the blame on the McConnell tax plan, which will cause 13 million people to go without health insurance within 10 years.

“Joe tried hard to work with Republicans to craft a tax plan that helps middle class Hoosiers and doesn’t cause skyrocketing deficits, but instead the McConnell tax plan will add as much as \$2.2 trillion to the national debt over 10 years. Billionaires like the Kochs get massive new tax breaks, while older Hoosiers get stuck with massive cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security to pay for it,” said Will Baskin-Gerwitz, Donnelly’s communications director. “What’s more, the McConnell tax plan gives billions of dollars in new tax breaks to the same health care companies who are set to wipe out any gains from the plan for middle class Hoosiers when they raise health care premiums by double digits. Folks like Cathy will be much less happy when patients can no longer afford to see them, thanks to the McConnell tax plan and other GOP efforts to sabotage our health care system.”

In February, Senate Majority PAC on behalf of Donnelly and McCaskill began running \$1.8 million in television ads and \$600,000 in digital advertising in Indiana



and Missouri criticizing the tax package. That ad maintains that more than 85% of the tax cuts go to the top 1% of earners.

Polling last week by Axios/Survey Monkey showed Donnelly trailing a generic Republican nominee 51-45% and President Trump’s approval at 53%, which was about



six points higher than other recent polls. It also showed approval for the tax reforms at 59% in Indiana while 38% disapproved.

While the tax reforms show traction here in Indiana and nine other states with crucial Senate races, the issue has not proved to be a decisive factor in a spate of congressional special elections thus far this year, including Tuesday's Pennsylvania CD18, where Democrat Conor Lamb has a tiny lead. Democratic congressional nominees in districts Trump won in landslide fashion have carved away significant GOP advantages. According to NBC News, in the eight major races of 2017 and 2018, including Tuesday night, Democrats are performing on average more than 12 points better than Hillary Clinton did in these states and districts. And, last night it was 20 points better.

■ KS-4 in 2016: Mike Pompeo 61%, Daniel Giroux 30% (R+31); KS-4 in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 60%, Clinton 33% (R+27); KS-4 in 2017: Ron Estes 53%, James Thompson 46% (R+7)

■ GA-6 in 2016: Tom Price 62%, Rodney Stooksbury 38% (R+24); GA-6 in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 48%, Clinton 47% (R+1); GA-6 in 2017 (initial round): Jon Ossoff 48%, Karen Handel 20%, Bob Gray 11%, Dan Moody 9%, Judson Hill 9%.; GA-6 in 2017 (run-off): Handel 52%, Ossoff 48% (R+4)

■ MT-AL in 2016: Ryan Zinke 56%, Denise Juneau 40% (R+16); MT in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 57%, Clinton 36% (R+21); MT-AL in 2017: Greg Gianforte 50%, Rob Quist 44% (R+6)

■ SC-5 in 2016: Mick Mulvaney 59%, Fran Person 39% (R+20); SC-5 in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 57%, Clinton 39% (R+18) SC-5 in 2017: Ralph Norman 51%, Archie Parnell 48% (R+3)

■ NJ GOV in 2013: Chris Christie 60%, Barbara Buono 38% (R+22); NJ in 2016 (presidential results): Clinton 55%, Trump 41% (D+14); NJ GOV in 2017: Phil Murphy 56%, Kim Guadagno 42% (D+14)

■ VA GOV in 2013: Terry McAuliffe 48%, Ken Cuccinelli 45% (D+3); VA in 2016 (presidential results): Clinton 50%, Trump 44% (D+6); VA GOV in 2017: Ralph Northam 54%, Ed Gillespie 45% (D+9)

■ AL SEN in 2016: Shelby 64%, Crumpton 36% (R+28); AL in 2016 (presidential results): Trump 62%, Clinton 34% (R+28); AL SEN in 2017: Doug Jones 50%, Roy Moore 48% (D+2)

■ PA-18 in 2016: Tim Murphy (R) unopposed; PA-18 in 2016 (presidential results):



Trump 58%, Clinton 38% (R+20); PA-18 in 2018: Conor Lamb 50%, Rick Saccone 50% (D+641 votes).

### Spending in GOP Senate race

Total spending thus far in the Republican Senate primary: Braun: \$2 million; Messer: \$83,000. Rokita: \$212,000; Americans for Economic Freedom Alliance: \$200,000.

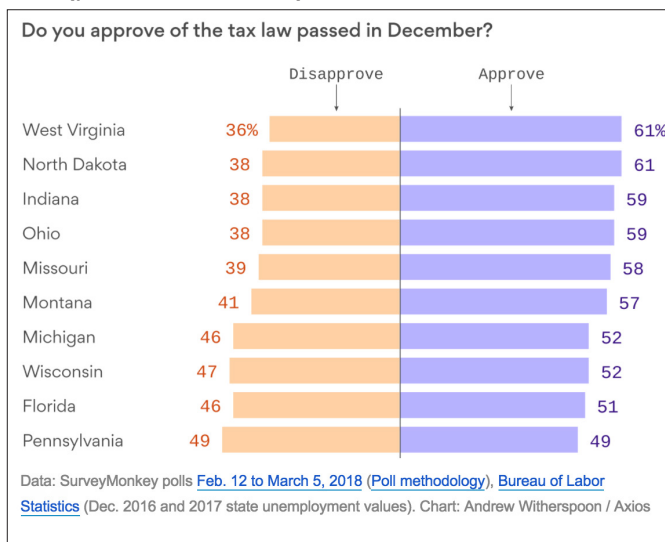
From Feb. 27 to April 2: Braun - \$743.2k Total (already spent - \$507k); Messer - \$300.4k total (already spent - \$83k); Rokita - \$258.7k total (already spent - \$187k)

### Immigration issue could help Donnelly

A majority of voters in nine out of 10 states that voted for Trump, and have Democratic senators up for reelection, support the DACA policy on immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children, according to new Axios/SurveyMonkey polls. In Indiana, it shows 67% favor a deal for Dreamers, while 32% oppose.

### Braun ad targets Donnelly on jobs

Braun's campaign released a new statewide radio ad, titled "Lost Jobs." The ad begins with President Trump discussing the epidemic of lost jobs in America as the result of bad trade deals made by D.C. politicians like Braun's opponents. "Sen. Joe Donnelly profited from Mexican labor, and Congressmen Todd Rokita and Luke Messer? They voted to fast track Obama's trade deals and against blocking Obama's executive amnesty," says the voiceover. Braun's campaign observes: "Unlike his three career politician opponents, Mike Braun has built a business from the ground up and provided jobs for hundreds of people across the country in the process. He's the only candidate with the business



experience to bring companies and jobs back." Earlier this week, Braun reacted to President Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs, saying, "I support President Trump's leadership on this issue. I'm for free trade just like the president is, but I think you need to call out bad players in the marketplace. For too long, career politicians have let our trading partners punch us with no retaliation and President Trump is punching back."

**Rokita 'implores' school safety**

Rep. Rokita "implored all Hoosiers to become proactive leaders within their school communities to protect the safety of students." He released his latest School Safety Summit report, saying, "There is no more time to be ill-equipped or unprepared when it comes to handling the lives of our future generations. I have hosted school safety summits so that our communities can proactively do their part in keeping our students safe. In the midst of a national conversation about school safety, these reports offer the local perspective of teachers, administrators, and law enforcement sharing what they have found to be best practices. President Trump is taking important steps today to explore the best ways to empower states and communities to protect our nation's children, and I'm proud of the work local education and safety leaders have offered to this important conversation." While Trump on Sunday called for the arming of teachers, Indiana Gov. Eric

Holcomb has come out against that tactic, and has asked for \$5 million to increase school safety.

**Messer calls on Dems to reject Farrakhan**

Rep. Messer called on "all lawmakers with ties to Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan to publicly denounce him." Messer said on Monday, "Louis Farrakhan's shameful history of anti-Semitic comments has no place in our society," Messer said. "Anyone who has ties to him should publicly denounce and condemn him. We cannot tolerate Farrakhan's hateful rhetoric and it's long past time Democratic leaders cut ties with him once and for all." Just weeks ago, Farrakhan gave a speech full of anti-Semitic and anti-white remarks. Recent reports indicate then-Senator Barack Obama, current Democratic National Committee Deputy Chair Keith Ellison, and several Democrat Members of Congress met with Farrakhan.

**Messer suggests Nobel prize for Trump**

Rep. Messer said last Thursday that President Trump should receive a Nobel Peace Prize in the wake of his announcement he would meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "If North Korea talks lead to concrete action, President Trump should be well on his way to his own Nobel Peace Prize. North Korea is signaling for the first time a willingness to discuss disarming its nuclear capabilities," said Messer. "If this happens, it would be a direct result of President Trump's strong leadership and

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decisive action toward the brutal North Korean tyrant. Meaningful talks would be more progress than we saw during the entire Obama Administration. President Obama received a Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 for being a charming presidential candidate. If North Korea disarms, President Trump's Nobel Peace Prize would be well deserved."

**Congress**

**3rd CD: Ritz to campaign for Tritch**

Former Indiana public instruction superintendent Glenda Ritz and Jill Donnelly, the wife of Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., will be the featured speakers at a March 24 fundraising brunch for Democratic congressional candidate Courtney Tritch ([Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). "The Power of Her Story: A Brunch in Celebration of Women's Voices!" will be from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Bergstaff Place, 2020 E. Washington Blvd. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Tritch

**4th CD: New Braun TV ad**

Steve Braun has launched a new [TV ad](#). "Having worked 30 years in business and created hundreds of good paying jobs, I'm ready to help President Trump put American jobs, American workers, and American values first," Braun stated in the email. The 30-second ad notes Braun's support for President Trump's America First Agenda. "I'm a pro-life conservative. I'll fight for us everyday in Washington," Braun stated in the ad, which ends with a female voiceover, "Steve Braun: The conservative leader Donald Trump needs to put America first." **Primary Horse Race Status:** Tossup

**7th CD: Carson distances from Farrakhan**

Several Democratic lawmakers denounced Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan's anti-Semitic rhetoric Thursday after facing pressure from Republican officials and religious groups to account for their past contacts with the controversial activist (Lima, Politico). Rep. Andre Carson (D-Ind.) distanced himself from Farrakhan's rhetoric in a statement to POLITICO. "As a Member of Congress, I have met with a diverse array of community leaders, including Minister Farrakhan, to discuss critical issues that are important to my constituents and all Americans," he said Thursday. "While many of these leaders have long track records of creating positive change in their communities, this does not mean that I see eye to eye with them on all beliefs or public statements." Carson added: "Racism, homophobia, islamophobia [sic], anti-Semitism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance have no place in our civil dis-

course."

**6th CD: Veep raises big bucks for bro**

Vice President Mike Pence reportedly raised \$300,000 for his brother, Greg, in a Washington fundraiser Wednesday night ([Politico](#)). **Primary Horse Race Status:** Safe Pence

**9th CD: Watson picks up AFT nod**

The 9th CD Democratic campaign of Liz Watson tells Howey Politics Indiana that she will get the endorsement of the American Federation of Teachers of Indiana on Tuesday. **Primary Horse Race Status:** Leans Watson

**National**

**Simon sisters top Dem donors**

IBJ reporter Lindsey Erdody reports that Carmel sisters Deborah Simon and Cindy Simon Skjodt are among the top dozen Democratic donors this cycle. Deborah Simon has donated at least \$2.9 million and Cindy Simon Skjodt \$2.5 million to date. Erdody asked HPI about the sisters' impact and our take was: "For key Democratic donors, there's a sense of urgency. I think it's only going to get more intense as we head into 2020." If Democrats can't make inroads in Congress and the Indiana General Assembly this cycle, they will face daunting challenges heading into the 2021 reapportionment cycle.

**Oprah, Warren won't run in 2020**

There was a spate of 2020 news over the weekend. President Trump revealed his reelection slogan, "Keep America Great." Oprah Winfrey and Sen. Elizabeth Warren said they will not seek the Democratic nomination. Warren spoke in the present tense. Oprah said, "I will say to whoever is going to run for office, do not give your energy to the other side." And retiring Republican Sen. Jeff Flake said that Trump needs a primary challenger in 2020, not ruling himself out, though he said he could not win reelection in Arizona. "The Republican Party is the Trump party right now," Flake said on NBC's "Meet the Press" with Sleepy SOB moderator Chuck Todd (just quoting our president). "But that's not to say it will stay that way." ❖

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# Chaotic end as school security bill dies

## Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS – After a chaotic end with time running out that killed a proposed \$6 million to enhance school security, Gov. Eric Holcomb attempted to extend the session to 1 a.m. today, then praised legislators after the General Assembly concluded. Democrats protested the attempt to extend the session. House Minority Leader Terry Goodin called it a “dog’s breakfast.”



Speaker Brian Bosma blamed the Senate for stopping work early on Tuesday and then spending two and a half hours in tributes to Senate President Pro Tem David Long.

“Our Senate colleagues were suggesting changes as late as 10:30,” Bosma told the IndyStar. “There was really no problem until the Senate went dark yesterday.”

Long fired back, with the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette quoting him: “We were ready to do work. There were some very difficult people to deal with today and it slowed down a lot of legislation.” That was in reference to State Rep. Ed Soliday who was angered over autonomous vehicle legislation that stalled and ended up dying. Bills reorganizing distressed Gary and Muncie schools also died.

“The General Assembly adjourned Wednesday with many accomplishments that will matter to people: Hoosiers will get training for high-demand jobs. People struggling with addiction will have more treatment options. Moms will deliver babies in hospitals equipped to meet their needs,” Holcomb said. “But, there’s still work to be done. After meeting with Speaker Bosma and Senator Long, I’ll look at all that can be done to complete unfinished business — whether that’s by administrative or legislative authority, if needed.” That could include a special session.

The governor signed 16 bills on Wednesday. You can view more details by [clicking here](#).

Goodin said, “This year, the Legislature did pass a bill banning tattooing eyeballs, even though I don’t believe there has been a single instance of it happening in Indiana. We did not pass anything to improve the state agency that is failing in its responsibility to protect at-risk children ‘because there wasn’t enough time.’ This year, the Legislature talked a lot about doing something to end the opioid crisis and drug addiction facing our state. Then we passed legislation to let people buy liquor on Sunday. It was a waste of time, a dog’s breakfast that should provide plenty of ammunition for those folks who question the necessity of even having a short session.

Senate Minority Leader Tim Lanane said, “Republicans are in strong control of both chambers and the governor’s office, so what they say goes, and their agenda is what is advanced. This year their agenda included banning eyeball tattoos, Sunday alcohol sales and sneaking

in increased access to guns in the final hour. I’m embarrassed by these priorities, when there are so many other issues that desperately need our attention... I am beyond frustrated that Republicans lead the charge to defeat our bills at every step, denying the voters who elected us from their due representation. What about bipartisanship? In fact, they refused to give 80 out of 85 Senate Democratic proposals committee hearings.”

## Messmer, Holdman, Bray seek pro tem

Three senators are seeking to replace Fort Wayne GOP Senate President Pro Tem David Long, who announced in February he is leaving his post the day after the November election (Kelly, [Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). One possibility is Sen. Mark Messmer, R-Jasper, who sent out a ballot or pledge sheet earlier this week to gauge support for November. But he didn’t want to talk about it, saying “it’s too early to make public announcements.” Two others vying to lead the Senate Republican caucus are Sen. Travis Holdman, R-Markle, and Sen. Rodric Bray, R-Martinsville. Some in the caucus wanted to have a leader chosen before the session adjourned.

## \$100 million for schools

Indiana lawmakers agreed to dip into reserves to make up a shortfall to get public schools the money they were promised — and they’re trying to make sure it doesn’t happen again (Cavazos, [Chalkbeat](#)). Both the House and Senate overwhelmingly voted to approve the final plan in House Bill 1001. The bill now heads to Gov. Eric Holcomb’s desk. Ways & Means Chairman Tim Brown, a co-author of the bill, said it was necessary to take the uncommon step and have the state to use reserve funds to make up the gap, but in the next budget year making up that difference will be a priority.

## Holcomb expected to sign Dreamer bill

SB 419 has passed the legislative session and now heads to Gov. Holcomb’s desk to be signed ([Fox59](#)). The bill lifts prohibition on young immigrants referred to as “Dreamers” from obtaining state professional licenses. Gov. Eric Holcomb previously commented on the bill: “Ultimately, Congress needs to clarify federal immigration law regarding DACA,” the governor said. “But, until they act, Indiana state law should allow DACA recipients to skill up and work here in Indiana. While Indiana’s Professional Licensing Agency acted appropriately and in line with what our current laws require, I am encouraged to see there is legislative intent to fix this.” Holcomb also commended the passage of HEA 1007, which approves nine additional drug addiction treatment programs—increasing the total number of locations around the state from 18 to 27: “Signing this bill into law will expand access to treatment for those struggling with opioid addiction, adding nine more treatment locations across the state.” ❖

# The kids are starting to get organized

By **CHRISTINA HALE**

INDIANAPOLIS – So the politics of it all really don't matter so much. The important thing is that we are beginning to see that generation of kids we worry about step up and get involved in productive, if controversial, civic conversation.



You know the kids I mean, the ones who grew up in an online world that may not understand what a desktop mouse is, but they sure do know how to screenshot their favorite selfie of themselves wearing SnapChat pirate face. Those same kids you saw in restaurants a few years ago, sitting at the end of the table with their cousins and siblings, all agog in their parents' tablets and phones, faces aglow with screen light and deep distraction.

It's funny, just a few years ago the standard protocol for parents to keep tabs on their kids' online lives was to keep their PC in the family room, common space where they could walk by and take note of what's up in their kids' virtual worlds.

Now our kids go to sleep at night and wake up with their friends, frenemies and untold strangers held closely in the palm of their hand. Most of them have smartphones and know how to use them.

While collective adult concern often centers around our youths' ability to interact in person and relate to human beings in the same room, not just in Gdansk at the other end of an online game, something is happening.

That concern also extends to an adult perceived lack of civic engagement among the younger generations. The Millennials have been the butt of jokes and rolled eyes at the workplace for years.

**Are young** people interested in more than Gigi Hadid's eyeliner and other more salacious clickbait?

As it turns out, yes. Yes, they are. And if you look around, you will see that not only the expected student leaders in your community are stepping up. Not only those kids with involved parents.

They are standing up online, but they are also organizing in person. This week's walkout demonstrate that

kids care, and they care enough to show up and not just hide behind their keyboards.

On a recent flight home from Washington I noticed a group of young girls, middle schoolers, in Uggs, scrunchies and MAGA hoodies. It was difficult not to hear them loudly, proudly geek out about their experience in the Capitol and their intention to keep the momentum going upon their return home.

After asking them about their ambitions and intentions, I suggested that they reach out to women's political organizations in their hometown for a hand up in their project. Of course, they schooled me in two seconds flat.

**Their counter-protest** to Wednesday's student walkout was already in the works. They had secured corporate sponsors and were working on their press packets. That's right. These middle schoolers were composing press packets! While we clearly may not agree on the issues, I was proud and amazed by these young women and their sense of agency and organization as well as their clear accomplishment in action.

My subsequent eavesdropping uncovered the intel that the students on the other side of the protest were similarly prepared, and neither group was willing to concede by laziness.

Pretty cool when you think about it. It certainly makes me feel better about the future when we have young people owning their future and not only showing up, but making it happen.

Government is healthier and more effective when people are involved and engaged. Fortunately, those coming behind us have this figured out. That said, buckle up friends.

They are coming. ❖

**Hale is the 2016 Democratic lieutenant governor nominee and served two terms in the Indiana House.**

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# He, alone, can fix it

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Last Friday, White House Chief of Staff John Kelly contacted Secretary of State Rex Tillerson traveling in one of those African “shithole” countries. “You may get a tweet,” Kelly advised, according to the New York Times.



It took an additional four days, but President Trump fired his top diplomat via Twitter. A day later, we’re learning that national security adviser H.R. McMaster and Kelly himself will probably be the next to go.

President Trump is setting up an administration of one. Perhaps two, when you consider that he can’t fire Vice President Mike Pence. The turnover in the upper echelons of this White House is approaching 50%. Pence is the only original inner circle member left.

Just 14 months into this administration, the new reality is that it may come down to Pence, National Intelligence Director Dan Coats and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to keep this wild president, once described by Tillerson as a “f—ing moron” within the rails. The true danger is when Coats and Mattis have had enough and split. Or are fired... via Twitter. The longer they stay, the more their sheer patriotism grows.

Americans and the world nervously watched on Tuesday as Tillerson, his voice quivering, thanked career diplomats for their “honesty and integrity” and Americans for “acts of kindness.” He singled out Mattis. He ignored President Trump.

The picture emerging here is a President Trump unrestrained by burdensome staff. He imposed tariffs in what was described as a raging and “unglued” moment following the resignation of his fifth communications, director Hope Hicks. He decided to meet with the North Korean despot Kim Jong Un after seeing the South Korean delegation briefing Americans on cable news. Tillerson said just hours before it would take months to prep for talks. He was surprised with the news broke.

**Mike Allen of Axios** observed Wednesday, “President Trump’s firing-via-tweet of Tillerson, following his sudden imposition of tariffs, reflects the president’s increasing comfort with solo use of his awesome power over policy, personnel and politics. It’s getting ever more difficult for aides to disagree with Trump, or stand up to

him about the consequences of decisions great and small. We’re told Trump trusts his own instincts and counsel more than he did a year ago. So, it’s getting harder to talk him out of acting on whims and grievances. And with the departure announcements by aides who have had a moderating or restraining influence, he has ever fewer restraints and guardrails.”

**The Washington Post** reported: “On Tuesday, Trump fired Tillerson, who had forged a tight working relationship with Mattis to try to rein in some of Trump’s most impetuous decisions. ‘I made that decision by myself,’ Trump told reporters at the White House on Tuesday. Though he was talking about North Korea, it is a mantra that has never rung truer in his nearly 14 months as president. Trump’s moves have shaken and alarmed a West Wing staff who fear the president has felt less restrained about acting on his whims amid the recent departures of several longtime aides, including communications director Hope Hicks and staff secretary Rob Porter.”

And the New York Times: “Tillerson’s dismissal, on the heels of Gary D. Cohn’s resignation, pulls the Trump administration further out of the economic and foreign policy mainstream and closer to the nationalist ideas that animated Mr. Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign.”

New York Times columnist Ross Douthat: “Trump will begin to usher out his more qualified personnel and replace them with, well, TV personalities — Cohn with Larry Kudlow, perhaps, or H. R. McMaster with John Bolton. But it also promises to further multiply the number of impor-



tant vacancies within the government, since more true-to-Trump personnel choices would inevitably have some trouble with the confirmation process, which in turn will encourage Trump to take more counsel from the shadow Trumpland of his campaign, where his more misfit-toy advisers tend to congregate.”

Left in the shadows are characters like Stephen Miller, who said just several weeks after Trump took the oath, “Our opponents, the media and the whole world will soon see as we begin to take further actions, that the

powers of the president to protect our country are very substantial and will not be questioned.”

That is reckless rhetoric with those on an authoritarian bent. A year after Miller made that claim, Trump watched China President Xi abrogate his constitutional restraints on power, becoming president for life. To which Trump joked (perhaps), “I think it’s great. Maybe we’ll want to give that a shot someday.”

Shudder.

**Trump’s decisions are now** coming from the gut. This an M.C. Escher-like presidency, where issues morph in circular fashion here on Pi Day, and the words, often both unwise and unquestioned, splay out in dizzying fashion.

Our president can tell Members of Congress to forge a bipartisan deal on immigration, only to trash the compromise they attempted to forge. He can shame Members for their fear of the National Rifle Association, only to cave to the NRA the next day. He can tell survivors of

school massacres that he will seek “comprehensive” gun reforms, only to end up advocating the arming of teachers and linking atrocities that only happen here with regularity to violent video games.

**Past presidents had** explained that they served with the help of a higher power and the masses. Richard Nixon explained, “Without God’s help and your help, we will surely fail; but with God’s help and your help, we shall surely succeed.” Ronald Reagan intoned, “I ask you not simply to trust me, but to trust your values — our values — and to hold me responsible for living up to them.” And George W. Bush: “I know the presidency is an office that turns pride into prayer.”

It harkens back to President Trump’s July 2016 Republican National Convention address, when he told an adoring throng, “I am your voice. I alone can fix it.”

It is Trump’s emerging personal manifest destiny.

❖

## What difference does it make?

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – What difference does it make? How that question was answered in 2016 helped to elect President Trump. A decisive number of potential Democratic voters in key states decided it didn’t make much difference whether Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump, each disliked for various reasons, was president. They stayed home on Election Day; Trump went to the White House.



What difference does it make?

How that question is answered this November could determine whether Democrats win control of the House and whether politically endangered Democratic senators such as Joe Donnelly in Indiana win or lose. Democrats, with a shot at control of the House, are divided still in many places, replaying the Bernie vs. Hillary saga. Battles between progressives and moderates grow nasty, such as in a congressional nomination contest Tuesday in Texas. If a lot of Democrats on the losing side in those battles sulk and conclude that the fall election now makes no difference, that no-difference attitude could make a big difference.

**What difference** does it make?

How that question is answered in 2020 could determine whether President Trump wins a second term.

Yes, he could. Many Democrats who deplore actions and antics of the president think Trump may not even complete his first term. They can’t imagine him winning a second. Of course, they couldn’t imagine he’d win the first. He still has a solid base and strong approval among Republicans in most states. What if another unpopular Democratic presidential nominee is added to the mix?

**A low turnout of potential** Democratic voters in some key states defeated Clinton, elected Trump. Some enthusiastic supporters of Bernie Sanders wouldn’t vote for a Democratic nominee they disliked. Some African-American voters also decided the election didn’t make much difference without Barack Obama running. We’re not talking huge percentages of these and other groups. But the margin of victory for Trump was slim in those decisive states.

Now, this fall. Turnout, always relatively low in non-presidential elections, will be decisive. To win the House, Democrats must have a large turnout in numerous districts now represented by Republicans. Primary elections now underway will determine whether Democrats have attractive challengers when voters ponder that question: What difference does it make?

**In an important Democratic** primary campaign in a Texas district where Democrats see a chance to take a Republican seat, there was an eye-gouging battle. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee opposed Laura Moser as the congressional nominee, warning that she was too far out left to win in the relatively conservative district and that she carried a lot of baggage Republicans could use against her. Several progressive groups saw this as a DCCC purge of progressives and told voters not even to listen to DCCC telephone calls.

Moser finished a close second on Tuesday and will be in a run-off for the nomination. If she loses the nomination, will progressives decide that "none" is the answer to the question: What difference does it make? If she wins the nomination, will moderate Democrats agree she is too far-out left for Texas be the ones answering "none" to the question so important to voter turnout?

**In Indiana, some Democrats** grumble about Donnelly's reach-across-the-aisle approach. They want him to reach across, not with a handshake, but with a hatchet in his hand to slash away at all the Trump nominees and initiatives. While Donnelly voted "no" on some nominees, he voted "yes" on the president's the Supreme Court nominee. While he voted against what Democrats denounce

as a tax give-away to the rich, he often has broken with Democratic leadership to support the president's position, likely with leadership approval because of the political situation (Trump carried Indiana by 19%).

Hoosier Democrats who can't stand Trump may well look at Donnelly's votes and ask for the fall election: What difference does it make?

Their consternation will be compounded by the Republican nomination contenders expressing full-throated support for Trump. ❖

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

## Lake officials fear eliminating gun shows

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – Lake County government officials are scared to death to eliminate the gun shows that are held six times a year at the county fairgrounds. There's never been a massacre at a school in Lake County, so what the heck. Lake County commissioners are content to allow the gun shows – which have one of the biggest loopholes in the country – to continue. It apparently doesn't matter that the loophole allows guns to end up in the hands of criminals. Jerry Tippy of Schererville, the lone Republican county commissioner,



said the shows will go on but there will be some changes.

One of those changes, Tippy said, is to have an ATF agent present at the gun show "to verify the legality of all the purchases. To my knowledge, that hasn't been done before." Well, Jerry, it's not going to be done now, either. Regina Milledge-Brown, an ATF spokeswoman, said her agency sets up information booths at a variety of gun shows but doesn't enforce federal firearms regulations concerning purchases at the shows. Apparently, the ATF just gets involved after there is a shooting.

**The other** two county commissioners are about as gutless as Tippy. Commissioner Kyle

Allen, D-Gary, whose city is the site of much gun violence, said he doesn't want to make knee-jerk reactions to the massacre in Florida. Apparently, Columbine, Sandy Hook, Las Vegas, Parkland and others haven't convinced him there is much of a problem.

**When talking about lame** excuses, Commissioner Mike Repay, a Hammond Democrat, may have had the worst of all when it comes to protecting gun shows. Repay said that if Lake County pulls the plug on gun shows that they will simply move to Porter County or elsewhere. Repay added that he doesn't want to do anything that is "unconstitutionally restrictive." Apparently, he doesn't understand that the county owns the fairgrounds and can rent it to anyone it so chooses.

Lake County Council attorney Ray Szarmach is cut from the same mold. Szarmach said state law prohibits counties from regulating guns and that turning down gun shows would permit gun show organizers to sue the county. I don't think there is a state law mandating that counties have to allow gun shows on their property.

**It's unfortunate that** former Commissioner and Gary Mayor Rudy Clay no longer is with us. In the 1990s, Clay tried to get the commissioners to ban gun shows.

He couldn't get a second vote. Clay said he couldn't support gun shows when some of the weapons sold there were spilling blood on the streets of his city. ❖

**Rich James has been writing about politics and government for almost 40 years. He is retired from the Post-Tribune, a newspaper born in Gary.**

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# College sports reform

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – It will probably come as a surprise to those readers who know me that at one point in my life I was an NCAA scholarship athlete. Many pizzas and beers later, I know I don't resemble my once svelte swimmer's physique. But, I digress.



My college degree was paid for by a full athletic scholarship. For that fact, I will forever be grateful to the good people at Ball State University. As the seventh child in a financially struggling family, my best shot at getting a college degree was to have an athletic scholarship. Of course, an academic scholarship could have been a possibility but something called advanced algebra always came between me and the academic-based money. This fact left me all wet, both literally and figuratively.

College athletics was much, much different from my high school athletics. College sports are incredibly competitive, even in a low-exposure sport such as swimming. My college coaches required lengthy morning and evening practices before, during and after the official season. In addition, my coaches required that significant time be spent in the weight room. While I had dreamed of spending the off-season lifting beers and sorority girls with equal aplomb, I found myself sweating away with the Neanderthals from the football team.

The bottom line is that based on money alone, with no value given to the enjoyment of going face down in chlorinated water for 10,000 yards at 5:30 a.m., my hourly rate of compensation for all of the time that I put in would have been about one-half of the minimum wage. Working at McDonalds would have put more money in my pocket. The bleachers at John O. Lewellen Natatorium weren't exactly filled during our swim meets. No admission was charged and yet a bunch of university money was spent on meals, travel and coaches. Let's just say that no swimmer was under any illusion as to their bargaining power when it came to compensation. We had no bargaining power. We were a financial drag and we knew it.

**Things are just a little** different for athletes playing major college basketball and football. They like to call them the "revenue" sports. College basketball and football are big money propositions and deserve a long, hard look.

The recent big money influence peddling, shoe racketeering, and recruiting irregularities at the University of Louisville and others, soon to be widely and embarrassingly known, has set me to thinking about whether or not the athletes are being treated fairly.

Twenty-five years ago as you traveled to Florida

on spring break, traffic would crawl through Louisville and you had time to look around. You could take a pretty good look at the University of Louisville as you drove by. At that time, there really wasn't much to see. There weren't the monolithic stadiums and sports complexes along the interstate that you see today. Today's women's field hockey field is nicer than the men's football field of 25 years ago.

**You would have to** be somewhat naïve to believe that the explosive growth of big university buildings and athletic facilities weren't somehow tied to the vast improvement in the athletic performance of the men's basketball and football programs. Big results bring big money and then big buildings. Or, is it big money brings big results and then big buildings? I'm not sure about the answer to this chicken-and-the-egg question, but I suspect moolah was the major factor.

While there has always been some degree of rule-breaking by some basketball and football programs, the magnitude of the current financial scandals affecting NCAA sports is staggering. The culprit for this latest binge in cheating has not been the wealthy alumnus who gives the star running back some cash so he can take his girl out for a milkshake after the game. We are talking mega scandals with mega cash so the trail leads to big business. It is the athletic shoe and apparel companies who are to blame for the massive flood of cash infecting college sports. Generally, if you want to find the source of a problem in any venue of life, just follow the money. There is no doubt that some folks are getting very fat financially from college sports. Let's take a look at our leading suspects.

First, and perhaps foremost, are the universities themselves. Perhaps not all universities, but the universities who pump out future professional athletes and perennially find themselves competing for national titles are the ones receiving the biggest bucks. Big shoe contracts, apparel contracts and television-rights money flows to elite athletic universities like manna from heaven.

**Athletic conferences** themselves are not far behind in the money game. Television rights and the conference cut of post-season play keeps the accountants at the conference offices busy.

Football and basketball head coaches have reaped a windfall of cash and most make more money from endorsements, shoe and apparel deals, sports camps and television programs than they make from their paltry million-dollar-plus university salaries.

Professional agents are another moneyed class who have prospered from the massive cash flowing through college athletics.

Professional sports leagues such as the NFL and the NBA prosper mightily from the millions saved by not having to run minor league programs. Heck, the NCAA is running their minor leagues for them. What a deal!

A few ultra-talented athletes grab the golden ticket and find their path to untold riches via college sports. The process is much like a grunion run: So many start the process on the front end of the quest and so few finally get

spit out on the end with their tickets punched by a professional sports team.

So here is how it typically works on a nice autumn day: Mom and dad load up the car and head for college town with high-priced football tickets in hand, wearing licensed school apparel in their school's colors. They park in an overpriced parking lot. They eat overpriced hot dogs and burgers in the stadium and wait for their team to spill out on the field. The team runs out on the beautiful and expensive artificial field in the monstrous stadium with a mega Jumbo Tron in the end zone. They are wearing the latest licensed apparel and shoes. The university elite wine and dine wealthy donors in the massive press box in the quest for those endowment dollars. Television pays big money for broadcast rights and doesn't waste a single opportunity for advertising dollars. It's a big money carnival and everyone seems to prosper.

**What makes this** entire autumn orgy of pigskin paradise possible are the kids playing inside the lines. Are they being treated fairly? Does a football or basketball scholarship truly fairly compensate a young player for the time, energy and risk of playing college athletics? I don't think it does. Without the athletes providing the entertainment, the stands are vacant and the television is showing "I Love Lucy" reruns.

Everyone seems to be enjoying the fruits of college capitalism except the supporting cast of college

athletes who provide the opportunity for the fortunate few to elevate themselves to the professional level. For every Saquon Barkley inking a massive contract, there are a bunch of kids who've been allowed to spend their college years lifting weights and taking underwater basket weaving classes – kids who either don't graduate or have no marketable skills upon graduation. These kids are also the ones who receive debilitating injuries and lifetimes of arthritic pain. For all of the mega money being produced by the college sports industry, a shockingly miniscule amount actually accrues to the benefit of the performers.

**In an effort to reform** big-time college sports and provide some equitable treatment for its athletes, I propose the following:

Require a financial contribution from the NFL and the NBA to be distributed to all colleges for use in funding all sports scholarships. Allow outstanding athletes to sign professional management contracts. Allow paid athletic endorsements. Require all television contracts, sponsorships, endorsement contracts, ticket proceeds and monetary subsidies to allocate 10% of the proceeds to a trust fund to be paid out to football and basketball athletes at stated ages in the future. Require complete publicly available transparency on the flow of every penny into college sports.

This may not cure all the ills of big-time college sports, but it will provide for a little equity for those who make it all possible. ❖

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**Dave Bangert, Lafayette Journal & Courier:**

How conservative do you have to be to have Rep. Todd Rokita show up these days? His constituents in Greater Lafayette, looking for a way to get him in the same room for a town hall, have been trying to figure that out since the start of the Trump administration. The message back from Rokita, in so many words: Fat chance. On Friday, that question wound up in the lap of Abdul Hakim-Shabazz, who found himself on the wrong side of Rokita's dividing line between "trusted conservatives" and the likes of "liberal college professors" when it came to deciding which U.S. Senate campaign debates were worth the 4th District congressman's time. "I was as surprised as anyone," said Hakim-Shabazz, a state politics blogger and WIBC radio host picked by the Indiana Debate Commission to moderate an April 30, statewide-televised debate in a three-way Senate race between Rokita, U.S. Rep. Luke Messer and former state Rep. Mike Braun. Here's the thing: Rokita said Friday that he would skip the Indiana Debate Commission debate – the first to do so in the commission's 10-year history. The reason: Rokita's camp says it has plans only for debates "organized and moderated by conservative Republicans." Rokita did, though, agree to an April 23 debate hosted by the Allen County GOP and moderated by Pat Miller, a WOWO radio host Rokita visits on a regular basis. "A trusted conservative voice," Rokita said. As for the Indiana Debate Commission and anyone else looking to put the Senate candidates side-by-side-by-side moments ahead of the May 8 primary, Rokita's team was specific: "Debates in the Republican primary should be hosted by conservative and Republican organizations which get into the issues Republicans care about, not leftist propaganda and gotcha questions from liberal media figures, liberal college professors or other parties interested in attacking Republicans and re-electing Joe Donnelly." ❖



**John Krull, Statehouse File:** Republican U.S. Senate candidate Todd Rokita made history the other day. He became the first candidate in the history of the Indiana Debate Commission to decline an invitation to appear with his rivals in an open, independent forum. Rokita says he has his reasons to duck the commission's April 30 debate against fellow Republican hopefuls Luke Messer and Mike Braun. "The Rokita campaign believes debates in the Republican Primary should be hosted by conservative and Republican organizations which get into the issues Republicans care about, not leftist propaganda and gotcha questions from liberal media figures, liberal college professors, or other parties interested in attacking Republicans and re-electing Joe Donnelly," the campaign said in a press release. On one level, Rokita's reasoning makes no sense. The moderator for the April 30 debate is Abdul Hakim-Shabazz, a conservative talk radio host, blogger and lawyer who never has met a Republican he didn't like. If Rokita and his brain trust are deciding people such

as Abdul have no place in the GOP, then he and they are shrinking the Republican tent down to microscopic size. On another level, though, Rokita's rationale raises at least two troubling questions. The first should be worrisome to Rokita's raging followers. Rokita's campaign slogan is "Defeat the Elite." In his first television campaign ad – in which he presents himself as a kind of Hoosier Rambo, albeit in pleated slacks, tasseled loafers and a button-down shirt – he pledges to vanquish the liberal establishment and "confront the elite." Just how he plans to do that by running away from them is a puzzle. Normally, confronting someone, anyone, involves, well, actual confrontation. Like in a debate. If Rokita's supporters think they've found a guy with the grit and guts to mix it up, they may want to think again. He's looking like a guy with a jaw made not out of glass, but delicate, easily breakable crystal. For those of us who are still shopping around for a candidate, what's bothersome is Rokita's implied argument that he intends to be a senator only for those Hoosiers who agree with him and his narrow ideology. ❖

**Caitlin Huey-Burns, Real Clear Politics:**

The transformative nature of President Trump's election in 2016 -- by way of a unique coalition of support -- had given Republicans a degree of optimism heading into a challenging midterm election season. Though the president has historically low approval ratings nationally, he is still overwhelmingly popular among the party's base, which includes voters Trump lured away from the Democrats. But as Democrats discovered over the past few elections with Barack Obama as president, star power doesn't necessarily trickle down. If anything, it fuels and unites the opposition. Now, after losing a congressional district Tuesday that Trump had won by 20 points, the GOP faces a similar reckoning. Democrat Conor Lamb's apparent defeat of Rick Saccone in a Western Pennsylvania district that combines steel country with the suburbs, comes on the heels of Democrats winning a U.S. Senate seat in Alabama for the first time in a quarter-century. Trump endorsed the Republican candidate in both cases. He visited Pennsylvania twice to tout his agenda and tie it to Saccone, who ran as an ally of the president. "This is a sign that the congressional map is more likely to expand than narrow over the coming months," said GOP strategist Ken Spain, who served as communications director for the National Republican Congressional Committee during the 2010 cycle -- when his party took control of the House. Former NRCC Chairman Tom Davis said Republicans shouldn't be counting on Trump to turn out voters anyway. "Obama couldn't turn out Democrats in midterms. Why would it be different for Trump? That's the history of midterm elections. They don't come out in off years. If you're in a primary election, you better be sticking close to Trump wherever you are. But in the general in many of these districts, being attached to Trump doesn't help." ❖

## Thousands of kids walk out of schools

INDIANAPOLIS – Thousands of students participated in the national walk-out honoring the 17 students and teachers murdered at Stoneman Douglas HS in Parkland, Fla., on Feb. 14. Students at Terre Haute, Indianapolis, Michigan City, Evansville, Fort Wayne, Zionsville, Goshen, Richmond, South Bend, Kokomo, Clark and Floyd counties, Lafayette, Muncie and Ball State University participated. Students at Valparaiso HS were given detention for walking out. The Evansville Courier & Press reported rather than call it a walkout or a protest, EVSC spokesman Jason Woebkenberg said administrators advised student leadership groups at each high school to develop a “peaceful way to articulate their thoughts and feelings about how school should be safe and violence in our nation and especially in our schools needs to stop.” Michigan City students met in the gym for an hourlong, student-led Q&A session with a panel that consisted of Michigan City Area Schools Board President Donald Dulaney, Assistant Supt. Wendel McColium, LaPorte County Commissioner Vidya Kora, Police Chief Mark Swistek, Fire Chief Randy Novak and Common Council President Don Przybylinski, according to the News-Dispatch.



## Brooks, Walorski to keynote Lugar Series

INDIANAPOLIS – The Richard G. Lugar Excellence in Public Service Series is pleased to announce that Congresswoman Susan Brooks and Congresswoman Jackie Walorski will both keynote the Lugar Series 28th Annual Luncheon on April 9, 2018, at the Indianapolis Downtown Marriott ([WBIW](#)). “At a time when more women than ever are deciding to run for elected office and to engage and participate in our political process, the Lugar Series and its mission are more important and relevant than ever,” said Congresswoman Susan Brooks. The

Lugar Series offers incredible opportunities to hardworking young women across Indiana and helps give them the tools to be even stronger leaders. For years, this important program has been supporting and empowering generations of Hoosier women who go on to play pivotal roles in our communities,” said Congresswoman Jackie Walorski.

## Mayor Snyder seeks DA team removal

HAMMOND — Lawyers for Portage Mayor James Snyder aim to remove some of the most veteran and successful trial lawyers from the government team seeking to convict him of public corruption (Dolan, [NWI Times](#)). Snyder’s defense attorneys are scheduled to argue Thursday before U.S. District Court Judge Joseph Van Bokkelen that the government’s prosecution team is guilty of effectively infiltrating the mayor’s defense camp. They argue this occurred when federal investigators seized the mayor’s email communications, including those with his former defense lawyer, Thomas Kirsch III, in violation of Snyder’s attorney-client privilege, which protects the privacy of his defense strategies. The mayor hired Kirsch in 2014. Snyder’s defense lawyers suggest the disclosure of defense secrets is so severe the judge should consider barring the current team of federal prosecutors from leading the case against Snyder at trial, now scheduled to begin June 4.

## Holcomb to mull waiving racino fee

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana legislators will leave it up to Gov. Eric Holcomb’s administration to decide whether to levy a \$50 million transfer fee on Caesars Entertainment Corp.’s acquisition of Centaur Gaming LLC—a fee the company says could derail a major project it has planned at Horseshoe Southern Indiana casino (Colombo, [IBJ](#)). The staff of the Indi-

ana Gaming Commission, which regulates casinos, has said the fee applies to the Las Vegas-based gambling company’s \$1.7 billion acquisition of Indianapolis-based Centaur and its racinos in Anderson and Shelbyville. The gaming commission’s board members will make the final call, probably in May or June, when they review the deal. But Caesars has threatened that it won’t pursue a separate \$90 million project at Horseshoe Southern Indiana if the transfer fee is levied. A lawyer for the group told the commission staff that Caesars would have to “reconsider the entire investment” at the Harrison County property—one of two casinos it already owns.

## Judge Young suspended

HARTFORD CITY – Blackford Circuit Court Judge Dean Young will get a preview of his upcoming retirement next week (Walker, [Muncie Star Press](#)). The Indiana Supreme Court on Wednesday suspended Young from the bench for six days, without pay, beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, and ending at 12:01 a.m. on Sunday, March 25. A panel of three judges appointed by the Supreme Court had recommended the six-day suspension after it evaluated a disciplinary complaint against Young. The Indiana Commission on Judicial Qualifications had alleged Young violated the Code of Judicial Conduct when he prohibited Derinda Shady, at that time Blackford County clerk, from entering the courthouse for six days in August 2015. The conflict between the clerk and Blackford County’s judges – Young and Superior Court Judge Nick Barry – stemmed from Shady’s reaction to a plan by Blackford County to eliminate two positions on her staff.