

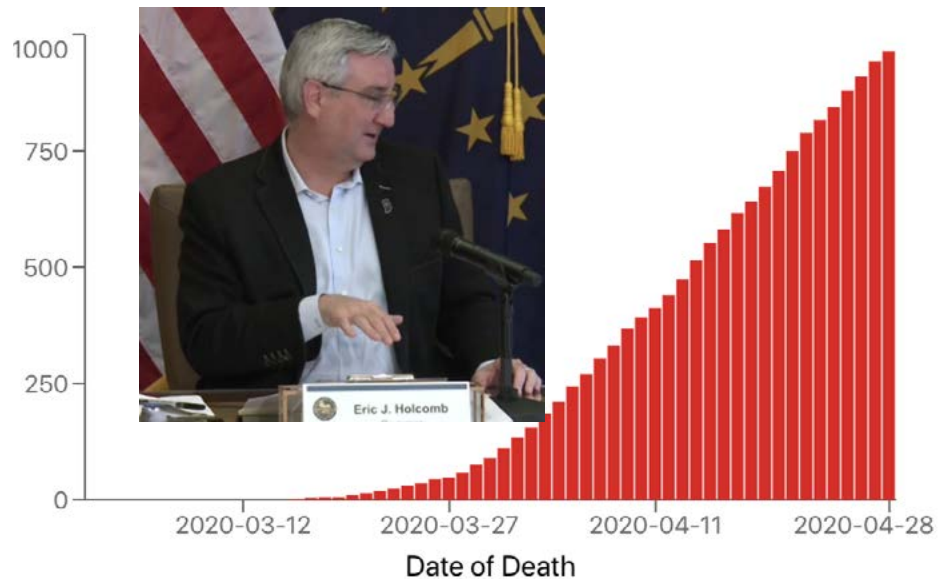
# Holcomb faces pressure to reopen

Governor will announce reopening sequence on Friday as deaths mount

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — As Gov. Eric Holcomb prepares for what he describes as “halftime” on the COVID-19 pandemic, he faces pressure to begin reopening the state’s economy while infectious cases and deaths continue to mount and elude the apex. He is expected to revise his shutdown order at 2:30 p.m. Friday.

On Thursday, Holcomb will meet with Vice President Mike Pence in Kokomo, where he will likely be lobbied to reopen swiftly. His presumptive Democratic opponent, former state health commissioner Woody Myers, says the state still lacks the necessary adequate testing capacity. “We are not even at the end of the beginning of novel coronavirus, of COVID-19 in Indiana,” Dr. Myers said Wednesday. “We haven’t seen a sustained decrease in the number of cases. We certainly know that there are pockets that are being found every



day of clusters that have not been adequately addressed. So, that worries me deeply.”

Holcomb and his pandemic response team will be in the process of putting what is being billed as a gradual reopening order – in the governor’s hoops parlance the

**Continued on page 3**

## Future shock arrives

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

TRAFALGAR — I moved to a new condo in the early stages of this pandemic, and as I restored my personal library, I found a coverless paperback edition of Alvin Toffler’s “Future Shock.”

In his introduction for the 1970 landmark book, Toffler explained, “I coined the term ‘future shock’ to describe the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short of time.”



With this coronavirus pandemic, we have essentially come to another pivot point in American culture which has begun to unfold over the past six weeks, joining the American Revolution, the Civil



**“What it has proven is that a drug can block this virus. This will be the standard of care.”**

- Dr. Anthony Fauci, after Gilead Sciences report a major study run on the drug remdesivir had shortened the time for COVID patients to recover by an average of four days.



**Howey Politics Indiana**  
**WWWHowey Media, LLC**  
**c/o Business Office**  
**PO Box 6553**  
**Kokomo, IN, 46904**  
**www.howeypolitics.com**

**Brian A. Howey**, Publisher  
**Mark Schoeff Jr.**, Washington  
**Mary Lou Howey**, Editor  
**Susan E. Joiner**, Editor

**Subscriptions**

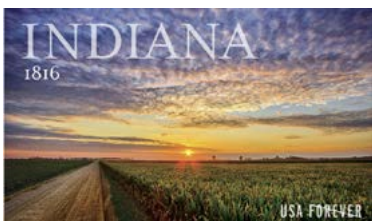
HPI, HPI Daily Wire \$599  
 HPI Weekly, \$350  
**Lisa Houchell**, Account Manager  
 (765) 452-3936 telephone  
 (765) 452-3973 fax  
 HPI.Business.Office@howeypolitics.com

**Contact HPI**

bhowey2@gmail.com  
 Howey's cell: 317.506.0883  
 Washington: 202.256.5822  
 Business Office: 765.452.3936

© 2020, **Howey Politics Indiana**. All rights reserved.  
 Photocopying, Internet forwarding, faxing or reproducing in any form, whole or part, is a violation of federal law without permission from the publisher.

**Jack E. Howey**  
 editor emeritus  
 1926-2019



War, the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression, Pearl Harbor and World War II, the assassination of President Kennedy, and 9/11 as events that inextricably changed our lives.

The dreary month of April ends with more than a quarter million Hoosiers out of work, at least a thousand of us dead, while our favorite stores, restaurants and bars are on the ropes.

Toffler writes of the human experience over the past 50,000 years, with 62-year lifespans accounting for 800 such lifetimes, about 650 of which were spent dwelling in caves. For most Hoosiers, the 799th and 800th lives were outside the agrarian experience.

Toffler wrote of a "super industrialist" age marked by the advent of the car and airplane a century ago. The new game changers of our time, Google and the iPhone, are about to enter their third decade. I've long written that Americans face an existential crisis about every 80 years. COVID has arrived about 79 years after Pearl Harbor.

In 1994, Toffler told New Scientist magazine, "We coined the phrase 'future shock' as an analogy to the concept of culture shock. With future shock you stay in one place but your own culture changes so rapidly that it has the same disorienting effect as going to another culture."

In most of our lifetimes, the ramifications of these cultural pivots seemed to impact our lives around the fringes. JFK's death gave way to the Beatles, Vietnam war protests, Watergate and the growing distrust of government. Sept. 11 brought the notion of entering an airline without shampoo bottles in your luggage and with your shoes and belts off, along with billions of dollars of security costs.

The pandemic of 2020 is the arrival of what was once an academic exercise, as Craig Dunn writes in his

column on Page 10. We read about the Black and Bubonic plagues. Now we get to experience one. A pandemic inspires paranoia, loneliness, and fears of a second Great Depression.

What we can't quite fathom is how our culture is about to change. A few months back, entering a convenience or liquor store with a mask on could get you shot by an alarmed clerk. Some of us fret-

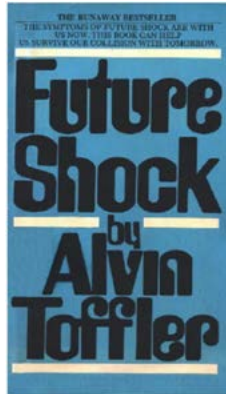
ted about a \$1 trillion federal budget deficit and the disappearance of Republican deficit hawks. Within six weeks, that's risen to \$4 trillion and prompted Mitch McConnell to ponder shutting off the money spigot a year before a COVID vaccine is available.

Derek Thompson writes in The Atlantic that the wobbling department stores and shopping malls will be put out

of their miseries, and that only 30% of restaurants will likely make it. "We are entering a new evolutionary stage of retail, in which big companies will get bigger, many mom-and-pop dreams will burst, chains will proliferate and flatten the idiosyncrasies of many neighborhoods, more economic activity will flow into e-commerce, and restaurants will undergo a transformation unlike anything the industry has experienced since Prohibition," Thompson writes. "Some of these changes are violent interruptions to modern life, like the closing of gyms and cessation of sit-down restaurant service. But in the long term, COVID-19 probably won't invent new behaviors and habits out of thin air as much as it will accelerate a number of preexisting trends."

I excerpted Thompson's Atlantic article in Tuesday's HPI Daily Wire, just above a Muncie Star Press story about Jack's Camera Shop downtown closing its brick and mortar shop. "It was a tough call, but if we continued we wouldn't have even been able to make the online jump," said Mike Powell.

More disturbing in that April 28 Daily Wire was the notion of food shortages. "The food supply chain is



breaking," wrote board chairman John Tyson in a full-page advertisement published Sunday in The New York Times, Washington Post and Arkansas Democrat-Gazette following the closure of packing plants in Logansport and in Waterloo, Iowa. "There will be limited supply of our products available in grocery stores until we are able to reopen our facilities that are currently closed."

**Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot** talked of the Cubs and White Sox returning to the friendly confines as well as 35th and Shields, sans fans. Fox News reported that 80% of survey respondents wouldn't feel safe returning to work. A Politico/Morning Consult poll revealed 73% think Americans should continue social distancing, even if it means continued damage to the U.S. economy, while 79% believe that second wave is very or somewhat likely.

Toffler adds, "Future shock is a time phenomenon, a product of the greatly accelerated rate of change in society. It arises from the superimposition of a new culture on an old one."

While President Trump kicked off his rule with what was roundly described as a "dystopian" element (or, as George W. Bush said of the inaugural address, "That was some weird shit"), George Packer in The Atlantic describes America as a "failed state," writing: "Every morning in the endless month of March, Americans woke up to find themselves citizens of a failed state. With no national plan – no coherent instructions at all – families, schools, and offices were left to decide on their own whether to shut down and take shelter. When test kits, masks, gowns, and ventilators were found to be in desperately short supply, governors pleaded for them



from the White House, which stalled, then called on private enterprise, which couldn't deliver.

**"It turns out that everything** has a cost, and years of attacking government, squeezing it dry and draining its morale inflict a heavy cost that the public has to pay in lives," Packer continues. "All the programs defunded, stockpiles depleted, and plans scrapped meant that we had become a second-rate nation. Then came the virus and this strange defeat."

Associated Press reporter Calvin Woodward put it this way on April 24: "When the coronavirus pandemic came from distant lands to the United States, it was met with cascading failures and incompetencies by a system that exists to prepare, protect, prevent and cut citizens a check in a national crisis. The molecular menace posed by the new coronavirus has shaken the conceit of 'American exceptionalism' like nothing big enough to see with your own eyes."

Through all this uncertainty, alarm, disease and death, there are rays of hope. Hoosier first responders are holding parades for health care workers in The Region. Sewing clubs have sprung up to fill the need for PPE the federal stockpile was unable to deliver.

**Driving north of SR135** in Trafalgar last Saturday was to find a line of about 50 cars waiting to pick up a drive-thru meal from the Crowbar Inn and Lounge. These were Hoosiers ready and willing to support their local watering hole after a month of distress.

"Trafalgar is a special place," owner Brian Maschino told Fox59 last year. "People definitely bend over backwards to help you out and my wife and I are blessed that Trafalgar accepted us." ❖

## Reopening, from page 1

"second quarter" – though the governor has said it won't be like "flipping on the light switch."

"When I say we're going to make the final decision at midnight Thursday, maybe the ink will still be wet on Friday, we're going to use all of our time to be best informed on Friday," Holcomb said at his pandemic briefing on Tuesday. "We're not going to try to short-circuit it, we're not going to cut corners. We're going to use the latest information."

It will be the beginning of the process that comes with the hard part of the COVID-19 pandemic, the reopening of business that was effectively shut down six weeks ago, resulting in the most jobless claims since the Great Depression. The virus has resulted in more than 900 deaths and 16,000 infections, according to official data from the Indiana State Department of Health. There

is speculation that the official data represents only those known cases and does not reflect deaths and infections not officially tied to COVID-19.

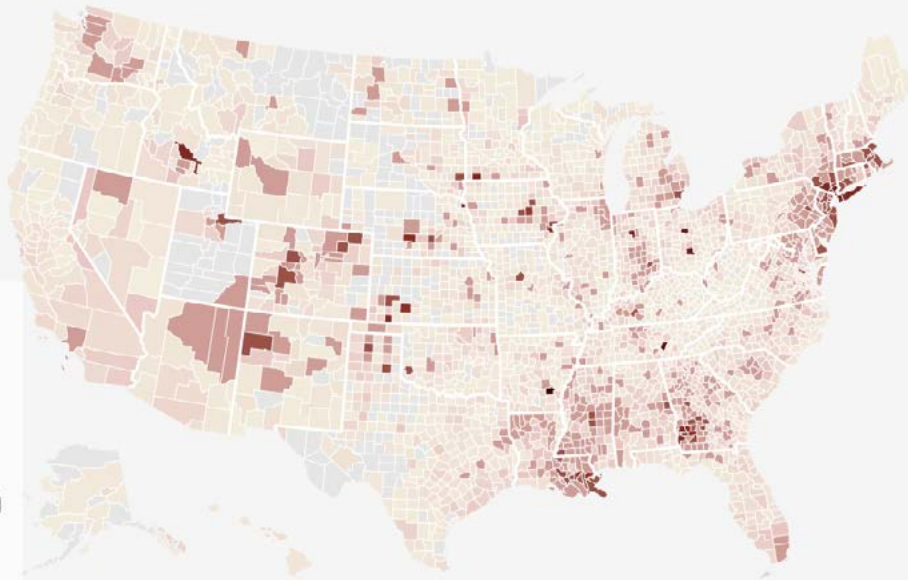
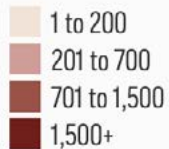
Holcomb will be making his reopening decisions not in isolation, but in a stew of unknowns. Because of a lack of a coherent federal coordination, resulting in less than 2% of the American population being tested, Holcomb and ISDH and county health officials don't know the extent of the virus spread, because many human vectors have been and are asymptomatic. On Tuesday, Holcomb and chief medical officer Dr. Lindsay Weaver announced that OptumService will conduct 100,000 tests per month at 50 locations around the state.

"Launching this partnership with Optum further expands Indiana's COVID-19 testing capacity," Holcomb explained. "These free tests will be available in locations across the state, ensuring even more Hoosiers who have symptoms or an affected family member can get tested for



## Confirmed COVID-19 cases across the US per capita

Cases per  
100,000  
people



coronavirus.”

The resulting data won't be available until June or July, well after Holcomb & Company will have to make crucial decisions on what businesses can reopen, whether K-12 schools and universities will be able to physically open for the fall semester, or whether they will have to continue on a virtual, online basis. It will impact restaurants, that experienced the loss of close to an estimated \$1 billion in revenue this terrible month.

“This testing ... is a key part of the whole equation that we have to get dialed in correctly,” Holcomb said, which is a distinct departure from the Trump administration's position. In early March, President Trump erroneously said that any American wanting a test could get one. It simply wasn't true.

Trump and Pence have been pushing governors to quickly reopen their economies. Last week, the two pressed Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp on that front before Trump undercut him, saying he “strongly disagreed” with the decision. “No governor wants to endure the same wrath as Brian Kemp,” a top adviser to a Republican governor said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to CNN.

Trump and Pence have been remarkably inconsistent on the federal COVID response, downplaying COVID for six crucial weeks in February and March, and promising testing that didn't materialize for weeks. On Monday, a reporter asked Pence what happened to the four million tests he had promised by mid-March, a threshold that wasn't achieved until April 20. Pence responded by claiming four million tests were conducted by early April, but a lag in processing the tests made the numbers seem lower. “So when you said four million tests, you were talking about tests being sent out, not actually completed?” asked the reporter. “Precisely correct,” said Pence.

On Tuesday, Pence stepped on his own messag-

ing, appearing at the Mayo Clinic, but refusing to wear a face mask in violation of the Clinic's policy.

Trump announced a “blueprint” that would give states federal resources to test 2% of their populations monthly, a drop in the pandemic bucket. “They had everything they needed. They had their ventilators; they had their testing,” Trump told the governors. “We're getting them what they need.” Also on that conference call, Trump encouraged governors to reopen schools this

academic year. “Some of you might start to think about school openings,” Trump told the governors. “I think it's something ... they can seriously consider and maybe get going on it.”

On Tuesday, Trump signed a War Production Act order mandating meatpacking plants to reopen. Late last week, Tyson and Indiana Packers plants in Logansport and Delphi closed, with scores of COVID cases affecting workers, some of whom stayed home due to the risk.

Holcomb will be making these decisions with the state nearing the apex of the curve, while hotspots continue to develop among the meat packing industry, nursing homes, the prison system and in some county jails, and in the northwest Region adjacent to Chicago, where cases and deaths continue to rise. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett extended his stay-at-home order to May 15 today.

Holcomb was asked on Tuesday whether Lake County was ready to reopen with Chicago still in the throes of the upward coronavirus curve. He was also pressed on Trump's order to reopen the meatpacking plants. He stressed a regional approach. “Questions will be answered by the numbers. It's not just looking at the positive cases,” he said. “It's where does that lead you? I have always said we have to make sure we protect the health care system, the health care network. We're very fortunate ... right out of the gate, our health care system ... we're going to collaborate. We're going to pool our resources. We're going to be able to, if resources are depleted or rooms are filled up in one hospital, we can partner with another nearby in that district. That has enabled us to make progress along the way.”

On that front, the Holcomb administration gets high marks on its management of this pandemic despite the lack of testing and tracing data. In preparation for the pandemic surge, the state doubled the number of ICU

beds (3,264 capacity and ventilators (3,189 capacity). On Tuesday, ISDH reported 43.4% of ICU beds available with 17.5% in use due to COVID, while 79.9% of ventilators were available (8.2% were being used by COVID patients).

"I've just got to stress ... we don't know when this is going to taper off, but we do know it's going to take awhile," Holcomb said. "So we know we're going to operate in this posture; we're going to have to approach this in two- or three-week increments. To date, that allows us to make these decisions."

"As much as we've done over the last couple of months, we've got a lot more to do and a lot more work ahead of us," Holcomb said on Tuesday. "I know a lot of folks understandably – and we are too, – are focused on this Friday. Our daily lives, our once daily habits have changed. That's why we are working around the clock on those updates, but I want to underscore everything that you've been doing, to flatten the curve, to slow the spread we find ourselves in a position to make the new decisions about how we move forward. It's all been an effort to slow the spread, flatten the curve and not overwhelm the health care system. That's just been essential. Your non-actions have been instrumental in putting us in this position. We're going to get the work done between now and 2:30 Friday with some updates."

At Wednesday's briefing, Holcomb added, "We're going to have this month, after month, after month. It's how we manage the cases," adding that this will be "the new normal." Said Holcomb, "We're in the second quarter," he said, using a basketball analogy. "We're coming out of the locker at halftime."

While Purdue University said it would continue employees working from home through June and President Mitch Daniels stressing the goal to reopen campus for the fall semester, Holcomb said, "As for colleges and universities, just like K-12, that's a decision not too far off. It's in the month of May where we're going to have to make that decision. We're going to receive input from our institutions of higher learning and will also be working with them to (determine) how they will safely accommodate their students; what the numbers are on the ground. So stay tuned."

Holcomb lauded the 6.8 million Hoosiers, most of whom followed his stay-at-home order that took effect on March 17. "Make no mistake about it, all of the investments we need to make, you can't relax your physical distancing," Holcomb said Tuesday. "That's made quite a difference. The proof is in the numbers. I don't want to take a step back because we relaxed our behaviors. Our Friday plan will reflect ... so that we can continue this progress."

Holcomb addressed the constitutionality of his executive orders. "I'm confident everything has been constitutional," he said, before his general counsel, Joe Heerens, addressed the presser. "From that first executive order on March 6 issued by the governor, we crafted the executive orders in a way that keeps them in bounds with the law,"

Heerens said. "You hear the governor and Dr. (Kristina) Box talk almost every day about the facts and data. Facts and data are so important in crafting the executive orders so they stay in bounds with the law.

"I think what's important here, as the facts and data change, that you make timely adjustments to the executive orders to keep them in bounds with the law," Heerens continued. "Those are things we have started to do. So on Monday we allowed elective (surgical) procedures to resume. The emergency management for state provides for 30-day increments. He can renew that, as he has done once already. That's important because these situations are limited in duration, they are temporary and not intended to be permanent. This is a limited situation."

## Holcomb and Pence

Toward the end of Tuesday's virtual press conference, Holcomb was asked about his relationship with Vice President Pence, who will be in Kokomo later today visiting the GM plant that is now making ventilators. Holcomb will join the vice president. "You should ask him," Holcomb said, though the former Indiana governor no longer avails himself to Hoosier reporters.

Pence was the initial face of the coronavirus federal response, until President Trump saw the daily briefings as a way to reach his political base. He eclipsed Pence, HHS Sec. Alex Azar and Surgeon General Jerome Adams for much of the past month, claiming his "ratings" were good. Trump and Pence now appear to view reopening the economy as crucial to their reelection chances in November. But reopening economies too soon is fraught with policy and political danger, with epidemiologists warning that a premature response brings the risk of another spike in cases, necessitating additional societal restrictions.

While the Trump administration has proved to be a riot of ineptitude and contradiction, Gov. Holcomb has emerged from this crisis widely viewed as a wise leader. He has kept the lines of communication with Trump and Pence open, but has staked his own course.

"Our requests tend not to sit on a desk very long," Holcomb said of his predecessor, though the governor has said for weeks he has pushed the Trump administration for more testing. "We've had a good shooting percentage for requests we've asked for, waivers we've asked for. I don't want to assume any favoritism because the administration has been good at constant contact, not just with me because the vice president calls Indiana his home state. They've been in contact with everybody, so they are very accessible."

On that front, even Democratic governors from Michigan and Washington have said that Pence has been accessible and frequently in contact.

"Last week he called when I was in here," Holcomb said. "And he called after the fact, just to check in. I don't think they are showing any favoritism, but just appreciating our requests don't linger." ❖

# Dr. Myers releases business recovery plan

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's presumptive Democratic nominee for governor, Dr. Woody Myers, is releasing a small business recovery plan to help better protect worker lives and speed economic recovery. The plan, titled Help for Hoosier Small Businesses Amid the Coronavirus Economic Fallout, is the latest installment of Myers' Map – A New Way. "Since the start of the pandemic I've proposed



Indiana take a more aggressive approach to fighting the coronavirus," Myers said. "I was the first to call for the closure of schools, an inventory of health resources, help for working families, and more testing. I've laid out my vision

for making Indiana a leader in building a national medical supply chain so that health care professionals never face medical supply shortages again and we aren't dependent on foreign suppliers.

"Preparing to reopen our economy should involve a plan to help small businesses and Hoosier workers recover," the doctor, successful businessman and former Indiana state health commissioner, continued. "This plan addresses that and more."

The latest plan pledges that as governor, Myers would:

- Establish a state stimulus program to infuse more money into our small businesses, including those hard-hit minority-, women-, veteran-, and disability-owned businesses for payroll, operational expenses, and working capital to help bail out our biggest job creators.

- Form a Small Business Recovery Task Force to help get Hoosier businesses back up and running and to identify and remove legislative obstacles now in their way.

- Create a robust Buy Indiana First campaign to encourage Hoosiers to buy from Indiana small businesses.

- Establish an incentive program to support Hoosier manufacturers producing protective medical equipment for Indiana medical professionals and first-responders.

- Delegate small business navigators to help small business owners, and in particular those in our minority communities, sort through loan and grant programs and apply for financial assistance.

- Create a state-subsidized meals program to make meals for Hoosier homebound seniors prepared by local restaurants and to the fullest extent possible using food grown by Hoosier farmers to support our restaurant industry, create jobs, and generate sales tax revenue for local governments, while also providing an important public service.

- Exclude small businesses, with fewer than 100 employees, from obligations to pay higher unemployment insurance premium rates for at least one year.

"Although Gov. Holcomb acknowledges small businesses are our economic drivers, he's done little if anything to help them survive social distancing measures and forced closures other than informing them they're eligible for federal assistance," Myers said. "Hoosiers are strong and we'll rise above the health and economic crises even stronger if we act now on a comprehensive recovery plan. It will take vision and creativity and, most importantly, strong leadership."

## Myers tests negative

Dr. Myers was tested for coronavirus and reported last weekend he was negative. "I am happy to share the good news that I received my coronavirus test results today and am, fortunately, negative," Myers said Sunday. "I now understand in a very personal way the anxiety thousands of Hoosiers feel every day waiting for their test results. But, testing is so important, both as a part of taking care of yourself and your family and for providing good public health information so we can actively target resources to fight the virus. We must do more as a state to ensure that any Hoosier that wants a test, gets a test."

Last Friday, Myers said the state isn't doing enough COVID-19 testing. He said state should be conducting 10,000 tests per day to meet guidelines from national experts. Researchers at Harvard University have suggested a daily minimum of 152 tests per 100,000 individuals. "We've got to ramp it up," Myers said. "If we are going to reopen the economy sooner rather than later then we have got to dramatically increase the availability of testing in our state."

## 5th CD

### Burton endorses Henderson

Former congressman Dan Burton announced his endorsement of Beth Henderson for Congress. "I support Beth Henderson because she is a strong supporter of the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution, the Right to Life — and she is a fiscal conservative," said Burton. "Beth will work with President Trump and Vice President Pence to solve our Health Care Problems. Beth also supports a strong national defense and a strong American foreign policy. She's nice but she is tough!" "It's such an honor to receive Congressman Burton's endorsement," said Henderson. "He is the epitome of a public servant, and my goal is to represent the 5th District with the same level of integrity and dedication that Congressman Burton demonstrated throughout his career." Henderson has been named to the NRCC's Young Guns program yesterday and has been endorsed by Forrest and Charlotte Lucas on Friday. Henderson has also been endorsed by U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, Indiana Right to Life, Luke Kenley, and State Rep. Tony Cook.



## Brizzi begins TV ads

Former Marion County prosecutor and candidate for Indiana's 5th CD Carl Brizzi launched his first TV ad on Monday. Brizzi takes a stand to punch back and hold the Chinese government accountable. "China lied about the virus. They poisoned Americans and caused unnecessary deaths. They have destroyed our economy costing us trillions. They have even infiltrated our southern border. China is not a responsible global actor. President Trump and I will hold the Chinese government accountable. We'll build the wall and break our dependency on China." **HPI Republican Primary Status:** Tossup

## Presidential 2020

### Trump blasts campaign manager, polls

As he huddled with advisers on Friday evening, President Donald Trump was still fuming over his sliding poll numbers and the onslaught of criticism he was facing for suggesting a day earlier that ingesting disinfectant might prove effective against coronavirus ([CNN](#)). Within moments, the President was shouting -- not at the aides in the room, but into the phone -- at his campaign manager Brad Parscale, three people familiar with the matter told

CNN. Shifting the blame away from himself, Trump berated Parscale for a recent spate of damaging poll numbers, even at one point threatening to sue Parscale. It's not clear how serious the President's threat of a lawsuit was.

President Trump told Reuters on Wednesday he does not believe opinion polls that show his likely Democratic presidential opponent, Joe Biden, leading in the 2020 race for the White House ([Reuters](#)). During an interview in the Oval Office, the Republican president said he did not expect the election to be a referendum on his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and added he was surprised the former vice president was doing well. "I don't believe the polls," Trump said. "I believe the people of this country are smart. And I don't think that they will put a man in who's incompetent."

Said Republican pollster Geoff Garin: "What we're seeing in polls is that Trump's personal ratings have gone down even more than his job approval ratings. And what that tells me is that all of Trump's antics are taking a toll on his vote because now more than ever people see his lack of judgment and lack of temperament as being consequential." ❖



The Prosper Group's overarching approach focuses on developing relationships and creating value by delivering rightsized digital solutions for every client.

# HOMEGROWN IN

# INDIANA

WITH INDIANA ROOTS, THE PROSPER GROUP HAS GROWN INTO THE GO-TO DIGITAL FIRM FOR CONSERVATIVE CAUSES AND REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES

DIGITAL STRATEGY THAT

## GETS RESULTS

-  FUNDRAISING & GOTV
-  DIGITAL ADVERTISING
-  STRATEGY & AUTOMATION
-  ADVOCACY

"Working with The Prosper Group to execute a robust digital advertising campaign was one of the best decisions we made for our re-election effort."



**DAN SCHUBERTH**  
ROBBINSVILLE TOWNSHIP COUNCILMAN, NJ

PROSPERGROUPCORP.COM

# In your face, from LBJ to Trump

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS — Everyone who had something he wanted met the same fate. The imposing 6-foot 3-inch senator turned vice president turned president would hover above his target, inches from their face, cajoling them into political submission.



It was called the “Johnson Treatment” and was such a dominant part of Johnson’s lore that it commands an exhibit at his presidential library.

Seven presidents later, George W. Bush became known, at least privately, for grilling advisors in what we called “policy time” in the Bush White House. In a timely reflection written on the occasion of the dedication

of the George W. Bush President Center, former National Economic Council Director Keith Hennessey, now a Stanford lecturer, wrote about the “Bush Treatment” – my description, not his.

“Every meeting was a dialogue,” Hennessey recalled. “And you had to be ready at all times to be grilled by him and to defend both your analysis and your recommendation. That was scary.”

A decade after Bush left office, the current occupant of the White House has his own way of doing things. Like Johnson he twists arms through negotiation and charm. Like Bush he peppers aides with questions. But this president doesn’t do it in private. He does it all in the eye of the camera. This is the “Trump Treatment.” And no one is immune.

**We were first** introduced to the Trump Treatment in “The Apprentice” boardroom. It was there that pre-candidate Trump “would ask a lot of very to-the-point questions, he would put people on the spot, he would get information about contestants that would make the other ones mad at them,” according to Mike DeMatteo, a member of the show’s production crew. A former contestant, Season 6’s Heidi Androl, echoed the observation. “One thing he loves to do [in the boardroom] is put people on the spot – he’s said he’s never debated before, but he’s certainly been a moderator in many instances on ‘The Apprentice.’”

Now, instead of grilling reality television show contestants about their weekly tasks, he’s the moderator and host of a daily reality show who is publicly grilling subordinates and putting high-ranking guest stars on the spot. It’s the Trump version of a tree falling in a forest with no one to hear. If the grilling happened and no cameras were present, did it really happen?

The interrogations range from the mundane – like when he asked House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy to confirm the day of an upcoming vote at the most recent Earth Day and Arbor Day event; to the harmless – asking then-Secretary Jim Mattis to confirm that we are, in fact, “making ourselves very strong again;” to the potentially harmful – inquiring as to whether Acting Under Secretary William Bryan and the Department of Homeland Security would study the feasibility of an “injection” of disinfectants into the human body to combat coronavirus. (For the record, Trump later called this line of questioning “sarcastic” and said he never once asked anyone to actually inject disinfectant into their body.)

**Sometimes, he doesn’t** ask a question, but instead calls people up to the microphone to “say a few words.” Sarah Huckabee Sanders and Kellyanne Conway were both called up to great fanfare at a Fort Wayne rally the day before the 2018 election. And Mike Braun, our then-candidate and now senator, was welcomed on stage at multiple events, iconic blue shirt and all. Improvisational theatre training should be a prerequisite for senior staff and all future political endorsements.

Away from the campaign trail, Trump asked three players and the chairman of the Stanley Cup champion St.

Louis Blues to, you guessed it, “say a few words,” during a victory celebration in the Rose Garden. And who could forget when Trump put every single member of his cabinet on the spot, “Apprentice” style, to share their thoughts on the first six months of the administration?

Trump puts the media on the spot, too, by demanding they turn the camera to show crowd sizes at rallies or dismissing their questions as “unfair” as he did with Fox New Radio’s Jon Decker on Monday. I have yet to hear a question come from Decker in over 10 years of knowing him that is worthy of a response, so kudos to Trump on that one.



So, why does Trump do it? I can’t pretend to understand his psyche (I’m not a paid television commentator, after all). But I do have a few ideas. One idea is that the hard, impossible to answer, questions are often asked



of senior administration officials as a way to provide Trump cover. Think I'm crazy? He/she agrees! Trump's questioning of Acting Under Secretary Bryan fits into this category.

**Another idea is he likes** to lend the Trump aura, free of charge, to those around him from time to time. For all the grief he gets for his ego, Trump regularly steps aside and welcomes others to the podium to get their moment in the spotlight. Yet another idea is that he thinks the public grillings demonstrate leadership and show curiosity. His critics knock him for lacking intellectual heft, so what better way to show he's thinking an issue through than to ask questions in front of everyone? More transparency and fewer leaks could put the New York Times out of business.

Come to think of it, we may have just figured out the opening exhibit at the Donald J. Trump Presidential Library and Museum. Step right up and say a few words. The television cameras are rolling and the hot lights are glowing. You're on the spot. ❖

**Pete Seat is a former White House spokesman for President George W. Bush and campaign spokesman for former Director of National Intelligence and U.S. Senator Dan Coats. Currently he is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis. He is also an Atlantic Council Millennium Fellow and author of the 2014 book, "The War on Millennials."**

## COVID isn't Republican or Democrat virus

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Is that coronavirus a Republican or a Democrat?

President Trump, who takes everything so personally, must think the virus is a Democrat. He resents it for ruining the robust economy he was counting on to assure reelection. He fumes about what the virus did to him. Unfair. No sympathy for him from the "fake news" White House reporters or from Democrats promoting a "hoax" about his handling of the pandemic.



Wait. Could that virus be a Republican? Look at the way Joe Biden, now virtually sure to be Trump's Democratic challenger, is forced to do interviews from his basement, with not exactly quality video. He can't get out for fundraising events to try to catch up with Trump's huge lead in funds. Bernie and Barack endorse him,

and that GOP coronavirus knocks it out of headline news. Unfair.

**Affix a political label** on the virus? Dr. Anthony Fauci wouldn't do so. There's no scientific or medical basis for that. But the virus certainly has become political. The coronavirus is blamed by one side or the other in this culturally divided nation as a threat to take away guns, to prevent access to abortion, to block religious worship, to subvert the right to vote, to kill the economic future of the young, to kill off senior citizens.

While this terrible virus should be confronted in a bipartisan way, there is limited bipartisanship. So, is the coronavirus a Republican or a Democrat in its political impact?

In Wisconsin, Republicans controlling the state

legislature and courts thought the virus would help them. They counted on fear of the virus to suppress Democratic votes, especially in Milwaukee, in refusing to postpone the primary election. Turned out, however, that it wasn't a Republican-friendly virus. Angry Democrats stood in line to vote anyway, helping to pull off a major upset, defeating a Wisconsin Supreme Court ultra-conservative judge supported by President Trump.

In Indiana, Democrats hope that the president's handling of the pandemic will diminish his high popularity with Hoosiers and bring more Democratic victories in legislative races. Well, a poll last week by Indy Politics/Change showed Trump with a lead of 13 percentage points over Biden in Indiana. Doesn't look like the coronavirus handling has much pro-Democratic appeal with Hoosiers.

**In Michigan**, it's a different story. A new Fox poll shows Biden with a lead of 8 percentage points in the key battleground state. A Reuters poll shows the same percentage. And Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, ridiculed by Trump as Half-Whit-mer, is shown in polls with much higher approval than Trump. With all of the attention, she is emerging as a top contender for the Democratic nomination for vice president.

In New York, where the coronavirus has been so devastating, so deadly, Gov. Andrew Cuomo has shot up in approval ratings. From days not long ago when he was hovering around 50% and regarded as not very likable, Cuomo zoomed to an amazing 77% approval.

In the nation, a new Hill-HarrisX poll finds 58% approving of Trump's performance in stimulating jobs and 51% approving of his handling of the coronavirus outbreak. Skyrocketing approval in New York for a Democratic governor doesn't mean much for the presidential race. Trump never had a chance to carry New York anyway. But approval ratings nationally give an indication of whether he maintains the base needed to win.

Is the coronavirus a Republican or a Democrat? ❖

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

# Studying the London panemic of 1665

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO — A person's memory can be a strange thing. Long ago experiences may be repressed for many years before some event triggers their remembrance. Just the other night I woke in the early morning hours and the following thought crossed my mind, "Journal of the Plague Year." I know I read something like this. Who was the author? Who was the evil teacher who forced me to read it? What in the world was it about? All that I could remember was that some old English author wrote a boring book about a plague in London. Who was tormenting me like this?



The next morning I took my cup of coffee and headed for my computer. I was curious whether there had been anything in that book that even vaguely resembled the experience that we are all having at this time in history. Much to my shock and amazement, life in 1665 London, England, held much in common with our modern day version of the plague.

As I began to reread Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the "Plague Year,"* it dawned on me that perhaps it wasn't that bad an idea to make the book required reading in an English Literature course. I wish I could tell my late teacher, Mrs. Heaton, that she was a pretty good teacher.

Daniel Defoe's book was published in 1722. He had been only five years old at the time of the great 1665 London Plague. The journal is reported to have been originally written by Defoe's uncle Henry Foe. Whether the book is non-fiction or historical fiction is not important. The parallels of the London plague of 1665 and the Covid-19 plague of today are surprisingly similar and perhaps instructive.

**In early 1665,** a rumor began that the Bubonic Plague had started up again in France, born by traveling merchant sailors from Turkey. The plague had first moved from a very small village and then infected merchants doing business with the Dutch in Holland. At first, the English felt safe from the disease because of separation of Holland from England by the English Channel. That comfort soon dissipated in February when the first reported cases of the plague showed up on the east side of London.

Despite learning of the presence of the plague in their city, most people did not give it a second thought and went about their lives like there was no danger. London was divided into over 60 parishes at the time and until the plague showed up in your parish, there was no call

for any alarm. In March and early April, the plague spread westward through London from the poorer neighborhoods into the wealthier parishes. Those who had the financial resources loaded up their belongings and their most valuable servants and moved out of congested London, bound for the safer rural areas. The poor and laborers were left behind to weather the storm. Defoe's uncle was a saddle maker and was in a prime occupation to witness the scourge which was to come.

Most people were in denial when the plague entered their parish. They had not altered their personal habits in any way and were shocked when they first heard the wails and crying coming from homes where the plague had taken its toll. Soon, the king issued an edict delegating power to mayors and public officials to take whatever actions they felt were important to stop the spread of the disease. The king also banned dramatic plays, festivals, organized fights and any other public gatherings.

**There was a desperate** scramble for vinegar which was used to wipe down everything and everyone in homes seeking to avoid the unseen pathogen. Homes with any resident having the plague were ordered locked up, with the windows closed, for 40 days or until either everyone was healthy or everyone was dead. The homes were guarded in 12-hour shifts by two watchmen, who made sure that no one escaped. Minimal food was delivered and left in a basket by the door, but mainly it was those homes who were prepared and had adequate provisions who survived the 40 days. This led to a scramble by those with resources to stockpile needed or perceived necessities. The poor or those who failed to prepare were left to suffer.

The dirtiest work of caring for the sick, removing refuse, making food and serving as watchmen was done by those who were poor and didn't have the luxury of remaining indoors or escaping to the countryside.

Of course, people suffered separation and isolation no better in 1665 than they do today and, inevitably, the search for food and provisions drove many a quarantined person to crawl out of a window and try and escape. This reasonable action achieved little but the further spread of the disease.

As the bodies began to literally pile up in the streets, people flocked into churches seeking divine protection from the plague. Eventually, most of the churches in London came to the conclusion that they had become a breeding ground for the transmission of the plague. Ministers joined the migration to the countryside and left their parishes empty. The few churches that remained open quickly succumbed to the disease and the plague sliced through clergy and parishioner with equal deadliness.

**It wasn't long before** those towns surrounding London grew suspicious and then intolerant of anyone on the road from London. Small militias denied passage to the London immigrants as thousands desperately tried to escape.

The disease ran its course throughout the summer and autumn of 1665 as over 25% of London's population

died from the plague. One hundred thousand souls were piled into horse-drawn carts and taken to mass graves where they were buried by king's decree six feet deep.

**As the disease began** its gradual decline from the peak deaths of 2,000 or 3,000 Londoners per day, the citizens of the city began to feel liberated and almost overnight the streets went from nearly empty to completely full. Life returned to a state of normalcy. Many of those who thronged the streets with raised arms praising God for his deliverance soon slipped into their former sinful selves.

The wonder of life went on, the misery of the plague was forgotten and I was forced to read a journal in my freshman literature class about events in a land far away. Defoe finished this journal with a short verse which summed up his feelings:

"A dreadful plague in London was  
In the year sixty-five,  
Which swept an hundred thousand souls  
Away; yet I alive!" ❖

## It's raining regions

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — Sequestration gives me time for more things with limited use. Recently, I've been developing a comprehensive spreadsheet of Indiana regions.

Regions, composed of individual counties, suggest cooperation in taking advantage of their differences.



Together, counties also can achieve common goals they could not attain on their own. Back in the mid-1970s, Indiana was cut up into many different county configurations called regions. No one set of regions served all purposes. Many were in response to federal or state funding administrative requirements.

There were always disagreements about which counties should be associated with which other counties. Library and hospital regions could not possibly be alike. So too, transportation planning and economic development regions, despite their similar natures, were always different.

Sometimes the reason for regions was to reduce administrative costs for the state. Dealing with nine regions was easier for legislators and administrators than confronting 92 counties. Regions could be used to require cooperation among neighbors despite historic hostilities and competitive incentives.

Some regional alignments encompassed all 92 counties in the state. Others focused on only a few counties and bounced rural counties around because they had no clear ties to nearby urban

centers. Many times, County A did not want to be included with County B and lobbied to be associated with County C. Often it was difficult to decide if Greene County should be with Monroe or Vigo. Did Kosciusko belong with Elkhart or Allen? Is LaPorte County appropriately aligned with Lake and Porter to the west or St. Joseph to the east?

Slowly, organizing regions became a laissez faire circus whereby any two consenting and contiguous counties could become a region. Any county could belong to as many regions as there were reasons for regions to exist.

Of course, every region required a regional strategic plan, preceded by a regional analysis of strengths and weaknesses plus opportunities and threats (SWOT). These analyses and plans could be provided by in-house neophytes or out-house consultants. The time and money allocated to such efforts was measured in minutes and hours or months and years.

**Often little substantive** difference could be found between the five-page stapled report and that of 50 pages, except for the paper and binding used in the final material manifestation of the effort. Graphics (now called visualizations) and PowerPoint presentations became de rigueur.

Regions were always composed of next-door counties. However, it might be best to organize counties according their similarities rather than their proximities. Counties with strong manufacturing profiles might be better focused if not lumped together with counties where tourism or agriculture dominate.


Today regions are founded on ground transportation and political maps. Perhaps our regional concepts need modernization.

Next week, if nothing more exciting comes along, I might have some additional thoughts about Hoosier regional thinking. ❖

**Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at [mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com](mailto:mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com). Follow his views and those of John Guy on "Who gets what?"**

**ANTELOPE CLUB**

615 N. DELAWARE ST. - DOWNTOWN INDY  
antelopeclub@hotmail.com



>> Lunch & dinner 6 days a week

>> Cigar lounge

>> Beautiful view of Downtown from our 2nd floor patio

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



# McConnell's insane war on local government

By SHAW FRIEDMAN

LaPORTE — As an attorney who represents several local government entities, it was just a week ago that I was closely following negotiations on the COVID 3.5 package and had become very hopeful that Saturday, April 18. Why?



Because both the non-partisan National Association of Counties and the non-partisan Association of Indiana Counties (AIC) had just sent emails out to members backing the Pelosi/Schumer package of aid to local government entities which was being included in the latest Covid-19 relief bill that would also extend the Paycheck Protection program and provide needed aid to hospitals and additional testing. Why, even the

president's chief negotiator, Steve Mnuchin, had signaled he would not oppose this cash infusion to America's cities, towns and counties that are on the front lines of this country's fight against the COVID-19 virus.

The plan was simple and straightforward. The allocation was based strictly on population and so of the \$29.5 billion set aside for America's counties, \$596 million was to be allocated to Indiana's 92 counties. LaPorte County, based on our 110,000 population, was in line for an immediate cash infusion of \$9,743,450 to help us deal not only with COVID-19 related expenses but make up for significant lost tax revenues during this crisis. Cash-starved local government entities throughout Indiana and throughout the country stood on the brink that weekend of a much needed "bailout" by the federal government.

**And then along came Mitch.** That's right, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, whose insane hatred of local government is only matched by his utter disdain for Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. By Tuesday morning, April 21, McConnell's negotiators had told Pelosi and Schumer that if they still wanted help for local hospitals and additional testing dollars, they'd have to drop the local government distribution, so that cities, towns and counties around the country would receive not a single dime in this relief package. In fact, McConnell was quoted on April 22 as saying he'd rather let state governments declare bankruptcy and would "oppose additional aid for state and local governments in future coronavirus relief bills." (Source: CBS News, April 23, 2020).

Mind you, Mitch McConnell had no problem allocating \$450 billion in no-strings-attached bailout money

for some of the largest hotel chains, airlines and cruise lines in the world in the CARES Act, but he worked to strip every dollar meant for local government from this latest COVID-19 relief bill. Even President Trump tweeted as late as Tuesday, April 21, that once this most recent package was signed, he wanted to begin discussions about legislation for "fiscal relief to state/local governments for lost revenues from COVID-19."

**As much as this Democratic** partisan would like to blame the president for this, I can't. There's every indication that had McConnell not objected, the White House would have gone along with the Pelosi/Schumer relief plan for local government. Mitch McConnell, with his insane hatred of both Chuck Schumer and local government, was the heart-breaking veto on a much-needed deal for local governments across Indiana, where cash-strapped EMS, health departments, law enforcement and EMA departments are on the front lines fighting this virus.

With the failure of the COVID 3.5 Act to include any money for local government, the only major pot of funds local governments can pursue now is the \$2.4 billion designated for Indiana in the CARES Act. Of that, the governor has discretion on designating up to 45% of the total to local government, but there are tough restrictions in the CARES Act on what qualifies as a reimbursable expense and every dollar will have to be vetted by the new Indiana Relief and Recovery Committee before distribution is made. By contrast, the money that was designated in the Pelosi/Schumer Plan – backed by NACO and the Association of Indiana counties – would have meant an immediate, no-strings-attached distribution to cash-starved Indiana cities, towns and counties.

Mitch McConnell only believes in restrictions and impediments when it comes to distributions to local government. He couldn't stomach a measly \$29.5 billion for America's counties, yet he greased the skids for the \$450 billion bailout of airlines, hotel chains and cruise ships in the CARES Act. Despite many of those same corporations undertaking stock buybacks and paying obscene executive compensation, few of them used bailouts after the 2008 recession to increase wages or payroll.

Even the president's well-honed populist instincts tell him that's wrong; he declared on March 25, "I don't want to give a bailout to a company and then have somebody go out and use that money to buy back stock in the company and raise the stock price and then get a bonus. So I may be a Republican, but I don't like that. I want them to use the money for the workers."

**You will never hear such** sentiments expressed by McConnell. In reality, it's the wily and unprincipled Mitch McConnell who tells the White House how things are going to be and once again local governments around the country get nothing, while McConnell's corporate buddies get the bailouts.

Just 10 days ago, those of us who represent county governments in Indiana could practically touch that \$596 million that was coming here to support our first re-

sponders and those on the front lines. And just like that – poof – in an instant, it was all gone because of the whims of one power-mad Senate majority leader. ❖

**Shaw Friedman serves as LaPorte County attorney and represents other local government entities. He is a longtime HPI contributor.**

## Time to watch credit reporting

By **ERIN MACEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — In the middle of a flood, the primary focus is keeping your head above water. As Hoosier families scramble to attend to their health, meet their basic needs, and care for children that are suddenly out of school or childcare, it is likely that their credit reports and credit scores are not top of mind.

Unfortunately, like a flood, the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences have the potential to create lasting damage long after the risk of drowning

has passed. It is essential for our policymakers and civic leaders to be forward thinking about the potential long-term impact of this crisis and put measures in place to protect consumers.

That must include credit reports. Credit reporting agencies (CRAs) or credit bureaus collect and use data from creditors to rate consumers' "creditworthiness," scoring consumers on factors like payment history, the

amount of debt a borrower has, the length of his or her credit history, any recent credit applications, and the types of credit borrowed. This means that paying bills late, leaning heavily on available credit, opening new accounts, or declaring bankruptcy to save assets, steps many Hoosiers may need to take during the COVID-19 crisis, can show up on credit reports and damage credit scores.

This is troubling, because these reports and scores have far-reaching implications for Hoosiers' lives. They not only factor into who can get a loan and on what terms, but they also affect insurance coverage and costs, job opportunities, housing, and other basic services.

**Before the crisis**, an estimated one in four unemployed adults reported going through a credit check when applying for a job, and one in 10 reported that information on their credit report led to them being denied a job opportunity. Similarly, many landlords – nearly half, according to a Transunion survey – run credit checks when evaluating prospective tenants. Insurance companies also use credit report data to determine how likely an individual is to make a claim and set premiums accordingly. In short, credit reports end up being a sort of gatekeeper for opportunity.

Given all of this, one would hope that our policy-

makers and civic leaders are thinking about how to insulate consumers from damage right now. Unfortunately, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which was established in the wake of the last great recession to serve as a watchdog for consumers, just issued guidance relaxing expectations for – wait now – credit reporting companies!

Yes, that's right, the CFPB quickly assured credit reporting companies that they will not be expected to follow requirements for resolving disputes about credit reports. So as consumers and creditors work together on payment arrangements in these unprecedented times, any misreporting – which is more common than you might expect even under ordinary circumstances – will not be required to be corrected in a timely manner.

**As former CFPB director** Richard Cordray pointed out in a recently released white paper, there are ample consumer-focused steps the CFPB could be taking to protect consumers in the wake of this crisis. Foreclosure prevention, debt forbearance, oversight of debt collection and tighter – not more relaxed – supervision of credit reporting companies would keep Hoosiers' heads above water and prevent lasting damage.

Where is the guidance urging creditors to work with borrowers on adjusted repayment terms or make generous use of "natural or declared disaster" coding meant to protect people's credit? These are logical steps for a consumer-focused entity to take.

In the absence of leadership from the CFPB, we need to see congressional action to direct the creditors and credit reporting agencies to shield Hoosiers from damage. Sens. Sherrod Brown and Brian Schatz recently introduced legislation to require a four-month moratorium on all negative credit reporting, with further protection for those who suffer lasting harm.

**It deserves consideration**, and we should take it one major step further. A credit score is an attempt to reflect consumers' likelihood of being able to make future payments. We should make sure, coming out of this crisis, that they are able to do so. During the same event that sparked Congress to create the CFPB, Hoosier taxpayers gave generously to save drowning financial institutions. It is time for Congress and Wall Street to return the favor. As Hoosiers work to handle their most immediate needs, policymakers and leaders should be looking to the future to protect credit scores and the financial situations they purport to represent.

❖

**Erin Macey, PhD, is a senior policy analyst for the Indiana Institute for Working Families and the Indiana Community Action Association.**



# Let's keep differences in perspective

By **KELLY HAWES**  
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON — Someone on Twitter said she had interviewed a guy for a landscaping job and decided not to hire him because he had a bumper sticker supporting President Donald J. Trump. "Now I'm feeling a little guilty about it," she said. "Should I?"



Her followers were pretty much unanimous in their response. "Absolutely not!" one said. "These people need to be shunned!" That sort of sentiment seems common on social media, but is it really necessary?

I understand some disagreements go deep, and some of us clearly look at the world from entirely different perspectives. Take this Facebook exchange concerning a newspaper report on the current pandemic. One woman suggested there was no way so many nursing home residents had died of COVID-19. "Most of them were already sick," she said. "If they had been healthy, they might not have died."

**Another woman fervently** disagreed. "How can you still NOT understand that just because someone has an 'underlying condition' does not mean they should be dead!?" she asked. "IF they did not have the COVID virus, they would still be alive today regardless of having any underlying condition like diabetes."

Maybe she should have stopped right there. Instead, she kept typing. "Seriously," she said, "some people either need to pay better attention in school or our schools need to do a better job because reading comprehension doesn't seem to have taken hold here very well!"

I'm guessing neither woman changed her mind as a result of that exchange, so was the fight really worth the

rise in blood pressure? Lots of people will say no. I can't count the number of times I've seen a friend or acquaintance suggest tuning it all out. "It's just too much," one said. "I don't need all that negativity."

Another had a slightly different take. "I think I need to take a Facebook break," she said. "Arguing with stupid people is tiring and unproductive. No wonder our country is in big trouble."

A lot of people just don't engage on current events. They go to Facebook to reconnect with old friends or to laugh at the silly jokes. They go for the funny dog video or that picture of a friend as a senior in high school. I understand that, I guess. It's more fun to talk about the hairstyles decades in the past than to fight over our president's latest misstatement of facts. And unlike our choice of presidential candidates, a cute dog video is something nearly all of us can agree on.

**To be clear**, I have no plans to stop weighing in on politics. I understand the debate can be frustrating, but I still think there's merit in airing the issues on social media. A respectful exchange of ideas might not sway those who have already made up their minds, but it could make a difference for the folks who are still mulling their choices. And it's those people, after all, who decide every election.

Still, politics isn't everything. Sometimes after connecting with an old friend on Facebook, I'm surprised to discover that we agree politically. Or that we don't. And when we disagree, I wonder whether it's really worthwhile to fight about it. We already have that previous connection. We shared the same teacher or our kids were in the same club at school. Can't we just hang onto that?

And what about professional connections? Do we really need to vote the same way as the guy who cuts our hair? Are those Twitter users right? Do we really need to shun all those folks on the other side? ❖

**Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana. He can be reached at [kelly.hawes@indianamedia-group.com](mailto:kelly.hawes@indianamedia-group.com). Find him on Twitter @Kelly\_Hawes.**



Indiana  
at your finger tips

**Download it today!**  
**howeypolitics.com**

**HPI Mobile Offers...**

**The Daily Wire - 6 Days a Week**  
**Photo & Video Galleries**  
**Access to HPI Columnists**  
**News Alerts**  
**and more for**

**\$0.96**  
per day

Now available for iOS and Android devices



# The race for the Senate centers on ‘core four’

By **KYLE KONDIK**  
and **J. MILES COLEMAN**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – There is a widespread consensus that, in the battle for the Senate, there are four races that may effectively decide the majority.

Dubbed the “core four” by one operative, the races in Republican-held Arizona, Colorado, Maine, and North Carolina are the ones that the Democrats seem to have the best chance of flipping. (For sports fans, the “core four” term may ring a bell: It describes the four players at the heart of the New York Yankees’ dynasty of the late 1990s and early 2000s.)

The general belief is that in order to win a Senate majority, Democrats have to sweep all four.

The Senate currently features a 53-47 Republican majority, and the seat likeliest to flip this fall is Alabama, held by Sen. Doug Jones (D). If that happens, Democrats need to win at least four currently Republican seats to forge a 50-50 tie that they hope a Democratic vice president would break in their favor (Crystal Ball contributor Seth Moskowitz went over the math last week, and observed that if Democrats were winning these four races, they probably also would be winning the presidency).

Based on the state of play in the core four races, the race for the Senate overall is something of a coin flip. We have the Democrats narrowly favored against Sens. Martha McSally (R-AZ) and Cory Gardner (R-CO), while Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Thom Tillis (R-NC) are in Toss-up races.

Our sense is that Gardner and McSally currently trail in both of their races (there have been recent public polls showing that in Arizona, but Colorado hasn’t had public polling in months).

North Carolina is the likeliest candidate for most expensive Senate race of 2020, and we don’t see a clear favorite now; we don’t see a favorite in Maine either.

One alarming development for Republicans is that the

likely Democratic nominees in all four of these races raised substantially more money than the incumbents in the first three months of 2020.

Former astronaut Mark Kelly (D) has almost double the cash on hand of McSally, even though McSally herself has otherwise been one of the cycle’s standout fundraisers (Kelly has just been incredible). Gardner still holds a two-to-one cash-on-hand edge on former Gov. John Hickenlooper (D), his likeliest fall opponent, but Hickenlooper outraised him substantially, about \$4 million to \$2.5 million, in the first quarter. Maine House Speaker Sara Gideon (D) roughly tripled Collins’ fundraising this past quarter; Collins retains a small cash edge, but assum-

ing she is nominated, Gideon will inherit a \$4 million war chest that Collins’ opponents started raising in 2018 as Collins backed Brett Kavanaugh’s confirmation to the

Supreme Court. And former state Sen. Cal Cunningham (D) more than doubled up Tillis this quarter, although Tillis retains a more than two-to-one cash edge. We’ll have to see what the pandemic does to fundraising in the second quarter, and certainly outside groups on both sides will be spending millions on these races.

**The advantage for Republicans**, if they retain one, is that Democrats need to win all four of these races and the presidency just to get to 50-50, assuming Republicans flip Alabama and no other seats change hands.

But this is also why it’s worth looking at some of these other races to see if the map is truly expanding as Republicans (mostly) play defense across the country.

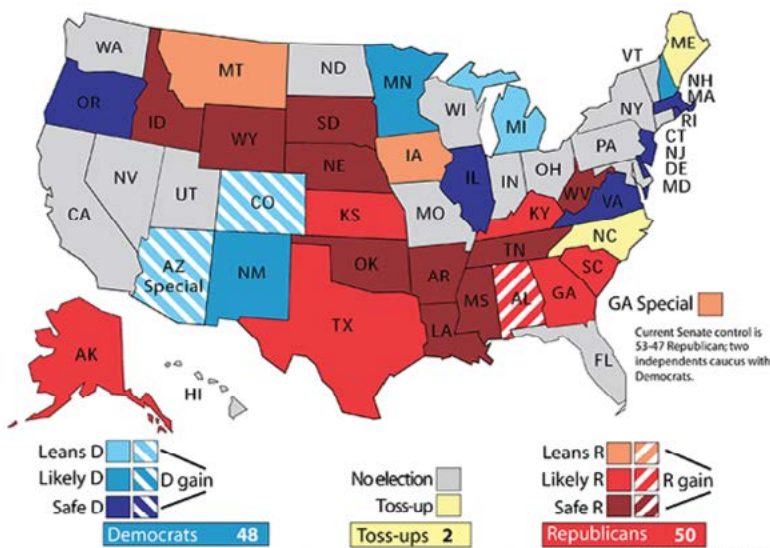
Our own short answer is that no other Republican-held seat currently matches the vulnerability of the “core four.” However, at least one race could eventually enter that category.

The best Democratic target right now outside the core four is Montana, in our view. Its emergence as a Senate battleground represents the best argument, for Democrats, that they are truly expanding the Senate map beyond the core four.

Gov. Steve Bullock’s (D-MT) late entry into the race last month prevented first-term Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) from coasting to reelection: We were prepared to move the race to Safe Republican prior to Bullock’s entry; we now list it as Leans Republican.



Map 1: Crystal Ball Senate ratings



Based on what we can piece together, the race seems like it's neck and neck at the moment. But does that actually make it a Toss-up? We are not quite there yet.

As Moskowitz noted in his Senate overview for us last week, it is very rare for an incumbent senator to lose reelection while that senator's party is winning the state for president. There are only four examples of that happening in the last seven presidential election cycles, and there were confounding circumstances in three of those four races. Donald Trump would really have to crater in order to lose Montana, which he carried by 20 points in 2016.

**So just generically, history** is really against Bullock winning.

More broadly, we at the Crystal Ball have been very skeptical in recent years of Democratic Senate candidates trying to capture GOP-held seats in red states. That instinct has served us well in recent years: picking Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS) in 2014 against an independent when others were skeptical of him winning; never moving Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) from Likely Republican the same cycle despite his race seeming very competitive at times (he won by 15 points); and always favoring the Republicans in an open-seat race in Tennessee last cycle (now-Sen. Marsha Blackburn ended up winning by 11 points).

In other words, we are really going to need compelling evidence to move Montana to Toss-up. We think Bullock's chances are decent, but we also think Daines has to be looked at as a small favorite still.

Still, Montana is not as Republican as Trump's 20-point margin suggested, and the incumbent presidential party often sees their performance sag from first election to second election in Montana, as friend of the Crystal Ball Jacob Smith has documented. Democrats have won the governorship four times in a row, and Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) has been elected three times in recent years. Prior to Daines' 2014 victory, the seat he now holds had never

voted for a Republican in the popular election era, which is a testament to an ancestral Democratic tradition in the state. Bullock is a reasonably popular governor at a time when governors in general are attracting widespread acclaim for their handling of the coronavirus crisis.

So this is a real race, to be sure. Just one where we continue to see a GOP edge.

Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA) also appears to retain an advantage in another Leans Republican seat, although the state could hypothetically dip into Toss-up territory at some point. Meanwhile, Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI) has been outraced by 2018 nominee John James (R) in three straight quarters, although their cash on hand is about the same. We rate that race Leans Democratic, mirroring our rating for president (which is more bullish for Democrats in Trump-won Michigan than other forecasters). Joe Biden (and Peters) have generally led recent polls there.

Our other race in the leans category, the Georgia Senate special, is one we may essentially have to set aside until November. The likeliest scenario is that either appointed Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R-GA) or Rep. Doug Collins (R, GA-9) will advance to an early January runoff following an all-party primary and be opposed by the Rev. Raphael Warnock (D). Democrats see Warnock as an electrifying candidate who can rally black turnout in the runoff; Republicans, meanwhile, point to Warnock's problematic divorce and history that suggests Republicans are favored in a runoff election turnout model.

**The eventual winner** will have to defend the seat in the 2022 regular election (the same is also true of Arizona).

Beyond these seats in the Toss-up and Leans categories, there are many other races in the Likely category on the periphery of the competitive Senate map. That group gets a little bigger this week as we move two previously Safe Republican seats, Alaska and South Carolina, to Likely Republican. ❖





**John Krull, Statehouse File:** He said it was a joke. The president of the United States stood before the nation at one of the daily briefings on the deadliest pandemic in modern memory that he has done his best to turn into campaign appearances. And he suggested that the coronavirus that now has killed almost as many Americans as the Vietnam War could be cured if people started ingesting disinfectants or began exposing themselves to sunlight. Then, when the disbelief over the sheer dangerous stupidity of his remarks turned first to scorn and then outrage, Donald Trump, as usual, didn't own up to his colossal screw-up. No, he did what he always does. He searched around for someone else to blame — in this case, everyone. He said he was being sarcastic and that it wasn't his fault if no one else got the joke. It's hard to believe that most Americans don't find the deaths of more than 50,000 of their fellow citizens in little more than a month to be a gut-buster, but that's The Donald for you. He's got a peculiar sense of humor and finds laughs in the strangest places. By now, Trump's inability to empathize with or even acknowledge the suffering of fellow human beings doesn't come as a surprise. Nor is it a shock that he sees his great office as an opportunity for personal gain and self-aggrandizement rather than a duty and a responsibility. What is still puzzling is the hold this president maintains over his devoted working-class supporters — the people who put him in office. ❖



kind of behavior they say is crucial to maintaining public safety? Pence's other explanation was even lamer. "Since I don't have the coronavirus, I thought it'd be a good opportunity for me to be here, to be able to speak to these researchers, these incredible health-care personnel, and look them in the eye and say thank you," he said. Perhaps someone should explain to him how to put on a mask. If it is covering your eyes, you are probably doing it wrong. Then again, perhaps this comes from the top, from a president who has always believed that rules and norms are for other people. Even as he announced the CDC guidelines this month, President Trump declared that he didn't plan to follow them. "This is voluntary," he said. "I don't think I am going to be doing it." 📄

**David McIntosh, Fox News:** A lot of people are suffering right now during the coronavirus pandemic. Some because of the illness itself. Others because of the economic hardship caused by the shutdown. We can and should continue working together to destroy the "silent enemy," as the president has called it. But as we discuss plans for the next phase of American life, however, I hope policymakers will remember the burden of red tape on working people across the country. Before the coronavirus threatened to overwhelm our health care systems, physicians weren't allowed to practice medicine across state lines. Hospitals in some states had to receive permission from the state government to add more beds. Puerto Rico, D.C., and other U.S. territories were not allowed to purchase personal protective equipment from foreign suppliers. Those rules and regulations, however, were rolled back as part of the mobilization against the pandemic and the value of those rollbacks is indisputable. They should be made permanent. But that is simply a first step. As the economy is reopened, Congress and President Trump must cut red tape throughout the economy in order to make it easier for employers to restore jobs, create jobs, and deliver essential goods and services to the American people. Extending the rollback of red tape to cover the reopening of the economy will help ensure a quicker economic recovery that isn't delayed by bureaucratic obstacles. Just as the Trump administration's initial rollback of regulations before the pandemic helped spur a 3 percent economic growth rate, another round of major reform of federal regulation will be key to reigniting our economy. To kick-start recovery throughout the economy, the federal government must do three things: First, immediately use existing authority to simplify regulations, including waiving fines and penalties when the business has made a good-faith effort to comply. Second, Congress should grant President Trump the authority to suspend regulations. Removing red tape will both allow healthcare workers to fight the coronavirus more effectively and businesses to more easily reopen and rehire employees. Third, simplified and reduced regulations should be made permanent to create certainty and incentivize more investment as the economy reopens. ❖

**Karen Tumulty, Washington Post:** The thing that immediately stands out from footage of Vice President Pence visiting the famed Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., on Tuesday is what's missing: Pence is the only guy there not wearing a mask. The medical center has a rule about masks, and as it noted in a tweet that was subsequently deleted, the vice president was made aware of it. The policy has been in place since April 13. It could hardly be clearer: "Mayo Clinic is requiring all patients and visitors to wear a face covering or mask to help slow the spread of COVID-19." Beyond that, Pence's bare face violated a recommendation by the federal government's own Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which states that masks are helpful in "public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain." Like, say, a hospital. So why didn't the man who is leading the Trump administration's response to the coronavirus pandemic wear one? Was he worried that it looked undignified? Unmanly? Is a mask too uncomfortable? Not worth the bother? Or maybe he just forgot and left his at home. Though the clinic's regulation notes: "If a patient or visitor does not have a mask, Mayo Clinic will provide one." Pence's excuse, he later told reporters, is that he is tested for the coronavirus "on a regular basis," as is everyone around him. But what if he had been exposed, say, since the last time he was tested? And beyond that: What kind of signal did his lapse send? Shouldn't people in positions such as his be role models? Aren't they supposed to demonstrate the



## ISDH announces tracing program

WASHINGTON — The Indiana State Department of Health is making plans to expand statewide coronavirus contact tracing efforts (Lanich, [NWI Times](#)). Beginning May 11, 500 centralized contact tracers will begin work to help track the spread of COVID-19. Contact tracers will be responsible for connecting with those who have tested positive for the coronavirus and conducting a case investigation. Infected individuals will receive a text message or email requesting that they contact a centralized call center that will be open 12 hours a day, seven days a week, State Health Commissioner Dr. Kristina Box said Wednesday. The state is contracting with health services provider Maximus to staff its call center with contact tracers trained by ISDH epidemiologists. Though the state is still finalizing its contract with Maximus, Box said she expects the program, call center and technology platform included, will cost \$43 million a year.



## Hogsett to extend order to May 15

INDIANAPOLIS — Mayor Joe Hogsett and Marion County health officials will announce their intentions to extend Marion County's stay-at-home order until May 15 ([WIBC](#)). "It's clear from talking to state leaders and community stakeholders that the challenges we face here in Indianapolis are unique — a city filled with large venues, densely populated neighborhoods, and active business centers. To ensure that we see continued progress in our fight against this virus, we must recommit to our social distancing efforts even as we plan for the future," said Mayor Hogsett. "I appreciate Governor Holcomb's partnership as he and his team continue to address the diverse needs of Hoosier communities.

## South Bend officials say it's too soon

SOUTH BEND — Momentum to reopen Indiana's economy from the coronavirus pandemic lockdown could soon collide with South Bend area leaders' worries it's coming too soon (Parrott, [South Bend Tribune](#)). On Tuesday came two more signs of that momentum to end the order: news that Simon Properties planned to reopen the University Park Mall on Saturday, and a tweet from Mishawaka Mayor Dave Wood that implored, "Mishawaka hang tight and keep strong. Reopening coming VERY soon!" But Dr. Mark Fox, St. Joseph County's deputy health officer, said Wednesday he doesn't think the South Bend region's economy is ready to even begin reopening. "My sense is the state of the epidemic is different in this part of the state than what they have experienced in Indianapolis," Fox said, reiterating his perception that the South Bend region is a couple of weeks behind central Indiana in its infection peak. "We haven't seen a consistent decrease in the number of cases. In fact, our number of hospitalizations increased this week compared to last week. Those indicators make us worry that we're behind Indianapolis and would make us concerned about letting the gas off the current mitigation strategies."

## Guard deployed to Westville prison

WESTVILLE — The Indiana National Guard arrived Wednesday at the local Westville Correctional Facility to begin supplementing for the staff that has been hard hit by an outbreak of COVID-19 at the prison (Kasarda, [NWI Times](#)). "They are helping with perimeter, exterior work," said Dave Bursten, chief communications officer with the Indiana Department of Correction. Guard medics also are helping inside the prison's infirmary.

## Drug trials suggest COVID drug works

WASHINGTON — The promise of an effective treatment against the coronavirus — an experimental drug that can speed the recovery of COVID-19 patients — raised hopes Thursday for faster progress in battling the pandemic and restoring wrecked economies and livelihoods (AP). The U.S. government and others say they are working to make the medication available to patients as quickly as possible. News of the medical advance lifted world markets, outshining gloomy economic data showing the U.S. economy contracted nearly 5% in January-March in the worst downturn since the Great Recession. California-based biotech company Gilead Sciences and the U.S. government reported in a major study run by the U.S. National Institutes of Health that the drug remdesivir shortened the time it takes for COVID-19 patients to recover by four days on average — from 15 days to 11. The study, involving 1,063 coronavirus patients around the world, also showed a trend toward fewer deaths among those on the drug, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious diseases expert. "What it has proven is that a drug can block this virus," he said. "This will be the standard of care."

## Delta suspends direct flight to Paris

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's first nonstop trans-Atlantic flight has been suspended until at least next spring amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which has halted international travel and led to multibillion-dollar losses for the air travel industry ([IBJ](#)). Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines Inc. has halted its nonstop, year-round service from Indianapolis International Airport to Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport through at least winter, a Delta spokesperson told IBJ on Wednesday.