

Hale, Spartz play to 'local' politics

Two legislators squaring off in Indiana's new battleground, 5th CD

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana's once reliably red 5th CD has been thrust into the 2020 limelight, ostensibly as an evolving suburban district in an election shaping up as a referendum on President Trump.

But in talking with Democrat nominee Christina Hale and Republican State Sen. Victoria Spartz this week, both insist they will be emphasizing local issues. "Every-

body, certainly in a presidential year, likes to talk about the top of the ticket," Hale said in a Zoom interview with HPI Wednesday afternoon. "It's generally the most exciting race. But our campaign is local. I'm talking to people here, about the issues here, the problems we face



Republican 5th CD nominee Victoria Spartz (left) and Democrat Christina Hale are facing off in the newly competitive 5th CD.

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Safely reopening schools

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Everyone – from Gov. Eric Holcomb to parents, teachers, students and employers – years to reopen schools and universities within the next three to four weeks. But parents are consumers, and most want schools to reopen when it is safe to do so.

On Tuesday, President Trump injected politics into the equation that is being debated by thousands of school trustees, administrators, state and local health officials. "We hope that most schools are going to be open," Trump said at the White House. "We don't want people to make political statements or do it for political reasons. They think it's going to be good for them politically so they keep the schools closed. No way.



"I'd like to go, but I'm not booking my airline flight yet."

- Gov. Eric Holcomb, asked Wednesday if he was going to the Republican National Convention in Jacksonville in August. He said he wasn't going to take his eye off the pandemic ball.



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Jack E. Howey
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 1926-2019



So we're very much going to put pressure on governors and everyone else to open the schools, to get them open and it's very important. We want to reopen the schools. Everybody wants it. The moms want it, the dads want it, the kids want it. It's time to do it."

On Wednesday, Trump rebuffed the Center for Disease Control, calling its guidelines "too tough." He tweeted: "I disagree with @CDC-gov on their very tough & expensive guidelines for opening schools. While they want them open, they are asking schools to do very impractical things. I will be meeting with them!!!" He threatened to cut off federal aid to schools that don't fully reopen.

That prompted Vice President Pence to say at a now rare Coronavirus Task Force presser, "Well the president said today, we just don't want the guidance to be too tough. That's the reason why next week, the CDC is going to be issuing a new set of tools, five different documents that will be giving even more clarity on the guidance going forward."

"We all know schools can safely reopen in the fall," Pence said.

The problem these educators and trustees are facing is the resurgence of the first wave of COVID-19. On Tuesday, newly documented cases topped 60,000 in the U.S. About a dozen Sunbelt states are at or near capacity for ICU beds, their medical systems swamped. Dr. Deborah Birx said in a video conference that she was surprised by the uptick in community spread of the virus, adding that leaders in states that were not hard-hit early on "thought they would be forever spared through this."

The notion that Trump's political foes want to keep schools locked down for partisan reasons is ludicrous. Keeping schools closed sets off a chain reaction that impacts jobs and the economy, with many parents having to choose between child care and employment.

On March 1, Vice President Mike Pence said on NBC's 'Meet The Press' that President Trump would defer to local officials to make pandemic decisions on local schools. "I think the president would respect any decisions that are made at the state and local level. Those are decisions that governors in consultation with local health officials will make as they deem that necessary," said Pence, who had been a passionate advocate for school choice at the local level over state and federal oversight.

In Indiana, it was Avon Schools suspending classes for two weeks after some of the first virus cases showed up that was a precursor to Gov. Holcomb's lockdown order in an effort to keep the state's hospitals from being overwhelmed. Nationally, it was NBA Commissioner Adam Silver and several NCAA conference presidents who pulled the plug. On Wednesday, the Ivy League suspended its fall sports seasons.

That set off the more general shutdown, which has had a devastating impact on the economy and President Trump's reelection chances, which had been based on a vibrant economy.

The Trump Administration has very little credibility left in its pandemic response. It shelved the National Security Council's pandemic

response team in 2018, failed to staff the Predict program that placed U.S. epidemiologists in China who could have given the U.S. an early warning (instead of relying on the Chinese regime), and then Trump spent February through mid-March suggesting the pandemic would “miraculously disappear” when warm weather came in April.

As late as last week, Trump was still in his alternative universe: “I think that at some point that’s going to sort of just disappear, I hope.” The Washington Post reported Trump has suggested this rogue disappearing act some 19 times since it began.

He did the same thing in mid-June when he urged many of these same Sunbelt states to reopen prematurely, tweeting that states needed to be “liberated” from their cautious governors. Vice President Pence suggested in April that the pandemic would end by “Memorial Day,” and in a Wall Street Journal op-ed suggested it was time to celebrate. Pence’s coronavirus task force has been almost non-existent during the June-July flare-up.

There has been no national test and trace program, and no national strategy when it comes to school reopenings. That has shifted to the states. That the CDC would revise its school guidelines during the third week of July, just days before many are scheduled to reopen, is another example of this administration’s clown car fire drill.

What are the federal guidelines to keep teachers, students and families safe? How will social distancing work in the classroom lunchroom and school bus? Will the feds help pay for the budget-busting added expenses? How will transporting students on school buses work? Should schools be open when health officials shut down local restaurants? What happens when the inevitable teacher, student, staffer or bus driver tests positive? Should schools reopen in emerging hotspots like Elkhart and Evansville?

A USA Today/Ipsos poll conducted in May revealed that about 20% of teachers will walk away rather than risk

their health.

In Texas, which has seen its hospitals at near capacity with the COVID resurgence, Education Commissioner Mark Morath said his state will offer both in-person and remote learning, and that it will leave it up to parents to decide. Morath said the health and safety of students and staff is his priority, which “is why the guidance laid out today will provide flexibility to both parents and districts to make decisions based on the ever-changing conditions of this public health crisis.”

I will repeat: Ultimately it will be consumers who will decide when they feel safe enough to dine in a restaurant, board an airliner, attend a Purdue football game, or send their kids back to school.

Bad decisions and missed opportunities have the potential to ratchet up to a chain-reaction disaster. Hoosier schools want as many students in class for the September headcount that the federal and state governments base their funding decisions on.

In August 2016, then-candidate Trump was given a Purple Heart by retired Lt. Col. Louis Dorfman, who had been wounded in Iraq. Trump said, “I always wanted to get a Purple Heart; this was much easier.” President Trump always opted for the “easy” route and his decisions have always been about HIM. The wearing of face masks signaled disapproval of HIM. He’s held big indoor MAGA rallies for maskless throngs because HIS ego needed them (and now there’s a new COVID spike underway in Tulsa). Ditto for the Republican National Convention in COVID hotspot Jacksonville this August.

His policy problem is that school administrators and parents aren’t looking for easy answers. They want to know their kids will be going into a safe environment, and not bringing home COVID to their more vulnerable parents and grandparents. ❖

5th CD, from page 1

in Indiana and the Midwest. I’m very much focused on being as local as we possibly can.”

Spartz, who won a crowded Republican primary by stressing her support for President Trump with the help of Club For Growth, agrees. “More people in both parties want more discussion on the issues,” said Spartz, who will be on a general election ballot for the first time in November after she won a GOP caucus to replace State Sen. Luke Kenley in late 2017. “A lot of times people want to make it a referendum on the president, but I’m running for a separate branch; I



have my own record. I have my own constituency. I can bring a lot to the table. I’m not running to be his running mate. I have to make my case.”

Like Spartz, Hale also served in the Indiana General Assembly. That ended when she ran with Democrat gubernatorial nominee John Gregg as his lieutenant governor nominee in 2016. She and Gregg lost when Trump and Indiana Gov. Mike Pence jetted out to a 19% plurality in the state, pulling in Gov. Eric Holcomb and Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch.

While the 5th CD hasn’t had a Democrat since Jim Jontz

won a district that has since been significantly reconfigured, it registered nationally when the University of Virginia's Sabato's Crystal Ball moved the race into its "tossup" category last week (See pages 16-17). That was due, in large part, to an internal poll showing Hale with a 51-46% lead over Spartz, while that same poll showed Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden with a 53-43% lead over President Trump, who carried the district by 12% in 2016.

Howey Politics Indiana is rating this race "Leans Republican" at this point, and until there is independent polling data. But there is little doubt that this could be the first Indiana congressional district to shift parties on the 2011 maps. Polling in state senate districts of Mike Delph and Jim Merritt in 2018 revealed President Trump's approval was significantly under water, and it was the lone CD that Sen. Joe Donnelly carried in his loss to Republican Mike Braun. Delph lost his reelection bid to gay Democrat State Sen. J.D. Ford within the 5th CD's footprint.

The 5th CD also fits the definition of an evolving "purple" suburban district, as the 5th's southern blue boundary in Democratic Indianapolis gives way to the cities of Zionsville, Carmel, Fishers and Noblesville where Democrats made local mayoral and council inroads during the 2019 municipal elections.

Spartz won the GOP primary as a self-funder (to the tune of \$900,000 in personal loans), joining the ranks of Sen. Braun, and Republican U.S. Reps. Jim Baird, Greg Pence and Trey Hollingsworth who were able to self-finance critical portions of their campaigns to win contested primaries in their ruby red districts.

Throw in a pandemic and related economic meltdown that has killed 2,600 Hoosiers and left 500,000 filing jobs claims and an equal number of small businesses teetering on the brink, and the stage is set for Hale to make a historic inroad.

Spartz and Hale agree on another important aspect: That health care will emerge as the top issue, if, indeed, they can wrest the focus away from the oxygen-sucking aspect of President Trump, who has dominated news cycle to the detriment of down ballot races for a third consecutive cycle.

"Well, health care," Spartz answered an HPI query on her top issue. "There is so much discussion, but there's a lot of politics, but not a lot of policy. This is an issue where spending is out of control. Affordability to health care is not where it needs to be, as well as access. It's limited because we have too many regulations and too many monopolies. The issue that really drove me to run for the state senate is that 80% of health care is really controlled at the federal level. I do not like it, but that's a fact. We have to give more flexibility to the states. States need to deal with this issue."

Hale put the district and nation's health care dilemma in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Health

care is the issue of our age," Hale said. "I was a very young single mom. I didn't always have health (coverage). I lived with that stress and fear of being just one sore throat or broken bone away from economic devastation. When I look at our state and 500,000 Hoosiers filing for unemployment, that's even more terrifying. These are jobs that may never come back. These are people who can't afford that COBRA coverage or pay for that doctor visit or pay for that medicine. We have to do better and give people an option.

"I believe we are now experiencing a time where it is demonstrating in the most practical way that public health is in everyone's personal interest; it's in the interest of the economy," Hale continued. "This district has a quar-



ter million people with pre-existing health conditions and we have to do better by the people. We see the impact when we don't. I intend to do something about it."

Spartz talked of a constituent caught in the current dilemma in a system that favors monopolistic hospitals and prescription drug administrators "who don't deliver value." Spartz said, "I'll give you an example: I had a constituent who called about unemployment benefits. She took a part-time job. When she did, she lost her unemployment, then she wished she hadn't.

"I was thinking, what's wrong when we have a system when people take some job and try to get out of these benefits and build some wealth," she continued. "We have these cliffs; we have a lot of perverse incentives. It

incentivizes people to stay on welfare. We have to have policies to empower people to move up. We give them enough money to constantly help them survive and really not help them to become middle class and start businesses. The whole system is so screwed up. So we'll have to rethink how we can have more consumer choice, more value to the people. We can do it; we just have to reshuffle this policy and have a serious, adult conversation."

General Assembly careers

This race pits a state senator against a former member of the House. "I looked at material issues. If we don't resolve our comprehensive issues that we have in our society, our problems, we'll never be able to solve problems of bad policies; unintended policies," Spartz said, adding that parts of bills she proposed ended up being stripped in other bills that became law or topics of summer study committees.

"My third bill looked into government efficiency," she said. "As a CPA, I understand we don't have an unlimited amount of revenue. It's where you spend your revenue to really have a government concentrated on core functions, but do them well. So that's something I started. We were going to make a bigger push in the budget session next year. Unfortunately, I had to pull out of my race (for reelection)."

That's when a number of Hamilton County Republicans and mayors indicated they were supporting Scott Baldwin for her Senate seat. Spartz opted for an unconventional route, declaring for Congress after U.S. Rep. Susan Brooks declined to seek a fifth term. She ended up putting together a comprehensive campaign across multiple media platforms, easily winning the primary.

Hale appears to have had more success as a legislator, sponsoring 60 bills that were signed into law during her two terms. "I'm proud that every single bill I passed had a Republican partner or partners," Hale explained. "What we need in Washington, D.C., are people who will reach across the aisle; who will collaborate and solve problems. Clearly we are facing some of the most serious problems of our lifetimes now, and we need solutions coming from Congress. I enjoyed building relationships of personal and professional trust in both parties, and really being a very action oriented legislator who got things done for my community and state."

Her initial policy foray after entering the House came about after her first door-to-door campaign when she upset Republican State Rep. Cindy Noe. "The first bill I passed I learned about just by knocking on doors in my district, and that was predatory cash for gold operators," she said. "We had a rash of residential entries that had a lot of community members and neighbors upset. These cash-for-gold stores were exploiting these opportunities where people were having family heirlooms stolen from

their homes. I found a Republican legislator, Tom Dermody from LaPorte County. It was easy to find that trust, do our homework together in order to protect people around the state from this kind of problem."

Another law she passed came with the help of current House Public Policy Chairman Ben Smaltz, R-Auburn, dealing with an epidemic of sexual assaults on Hoosier kids. "A lot of the issues I chose to work on are human issues, they are not Republican or Democrat when it comes to protecting vulnerable populations from assault, or protecting our kids," Hale said.

"Ben and I got together to take on the issue that one in every six girls in Indiana had been either raped or sexually assaulted, and an untold number of boys and young men, because we were not tracking that data as we should," she continued. "We did look at data of kids age zero to six with sexually transmitted diseases that were being reported at urgent cares and emergency rooms. We wanted to do something about it because that's unacceptable to anybody, not matter what your political party is.



So we passed a bill that defined a set of crimes against children. So if you are a convicted child molester or child pornographer in our state, because of this law you can never again set foot on school property. It had nothing to do with politics; it had everything to do with protecting kids. I enjoyed with working with Ben and it was rewarding that kids are safer because of that law."

The pandemic campaign

Both Hale and Spartz are personable legislators. The coronavirus pandemic that shut the state down in March left both of them scrambling to readjust.

"On a very practical level this pandemic and this shared experience we've had, living in isolation, going to the grocery store with a mask on, being worried about

our elderly, friends and family with health conditions has taught people that public health is in everyone's interest," Hale said. "Particularly when we see the broader public suffering the kind of existential threats that have a devastating impact on the economy as well."

She continued, "My favorite part of campaigning is interacting with people and knocking on doors, speaking to everybody at their doorstep, community meeting or farmers market. That's just not possible to do right now and provides for everyone's health and safety."

"We had to find ways to connect through a screen or in a way to protect our volunteers and supporters as well as our constituents throughout this district," Hale said. "It's been different. There's no applause or booing in a Zoom room. You do have an opportunity to meet a lot of people, in their home and on a human level and that part I've really enjoyed."

Spartz, too, likes the retail politics that the pandemic has shelved. "Epidemics happen every 100 years and it has to happen the year I decided to run for Congress," she sighed. "All that adversity makes you tougher. Looking back, it wasn't easy, but it made me stronger. In the business world and in real life, you have things that come at you unexpected. You have to adjust quickly. I had to completely revamp the plan. Completely. We had to change the strategy."

That includes wearing face masks when she does venture out from Zoom meetings and into the public. "I probably have 10 in my car," she said of her face masks. "It's important depending on the environment wherever I go."

Hard to predict

Spartz acknowledges, "It's hard to predict what's going to happen this fall. We have to be ready and we'll try to do as much as possible. It's different in Marion County than it is in Grant County."

Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer adds, "I think it is still clearly a Republican district. The governor polls very strong in the 5th." But, he adds, "It's going to be the area of focus. We have strategized on that, as well as some of the legislative races in the district. One of the benefits of Republican strength is we're going to run this race with our foot all the way down on the floorboard. We

do play the entire board."

Fueling the talk of a referendum on President Trump with the pandemic still raging, Spartz was asked if the administration handled it correctly. "He handled it as good as he could. All of us can do things better, looking back. But the way our system was set up, he actually went much quicker to private enterprise. He understood that government agencies were not going to be fast and agile. He gave discretion to the states. There is always room for improvement on anything you do. But I'm not going to say



it would have been bad if he would have centralized and handled everything as president. He's not the king. It was smart for him to rely on a lot of other people."

Hale was posed the same question.

"I think it's clear from the evidence of this pandemic our nation is heading in the wrong direction as it relates to health," said Hale. "It is clear that the wearing of a mask has been politicized and that's not good for anybody. To protect you, I need to be wearing a mask."

"We have come so far in this fight against COVID and we need to be united and solution-oriented," Hale added, quoting a recent Eli Lilly executive in an IndyStar op-ed: "Moving forward it is critical that we follow the evidence and proceed with caution."

"That's the advice I give to the Trump administration, myself and to my constituents," Hale added. **HPI Horse Race:** Leans Spartz ❖

How the AG race will unfold on Friday

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Some 1,700 Republican delegates had sent in convention ballots in the Indiana attorney general's race by Wednesday, with the winner to be announced around 3 p.m. on Friday.

"We were at about 92% return," Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer told Howey Politics Indiana on Wednesday. "We got way more participation than if we had held an in-person event."



Hupfer said that ballots will arrive at the CPA firm Katz & Sapper by 5 p.m. today, and will be delivered by "armored truck" around 10 a.m. on Friday to Republican headquarters. Ballots will be separated from envelopes (to ensure anonymity) and the counting will begin around noon.

Space at the headquarters will allow the campaigns of Attorney General Curtis Hill, Todd Rokita, John Westercamp and Decatur County Prosecutor Nate Harter to be present and monitor the counting process. The unveiling of the nominee will be livestreamed on the INGOP's Facebook page.

"We'll let the winner do what they want to do" after the announcement, Hupfer said.

Hupfer, who doubles as Gov. Eric Holcomb's campaign manager, didn't want to get into hypotheticals on how the governor's reelection organization would handle a Hill re-nomination. Holcomb called on Hill to resign in July 2018 following the surfacing of sexual harassment allegations.

Hupfer said that the resurgence of the pandemic that spurred the Indiana Republican Central Committee to opt for the virtual convention has validated the decision. "I commend everyone on the state committee to work through this the way state committees haven't had to do. It's been a workable solution."

Hupfer said doing a virtual convention was "about 10 times harder to do than an in-person" event. "We are not built to be an election administrator. He said the vote-



by-mail AG's race has been "cumbersome" for his staff, and took an inordinate amount of time. "Some folks didn't get ballots," he said. The 90-minute virtual convention show on WISH-TV also absorbed a lot of staff time.

Governor

Holcomb to report \$8M cash on hand

Hupfer said that Gov. Holcomb's reelection campaign will post more than \$8 million cash on hand on its mid-year report, after raising \$1.4 million in June. The governor held off on campaign fundraising events during the height of the pandemic in April and May.

He said that Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch will post around \$165,000 on top of the \$250,000 she handed over to the governor's reelection campaign. The INGOP will report more than \$1 million cash on hand.

"A lot of this is due to the strength of the governor," Hupfer said. "He had a 79% approval rating when we were last in the field (polling) and led the ballot test 64-21%. He's popular in all geographic areas. There are no weaknesses. On the endorsement front support has been diverse; he's got the Indy Chamber, and the NW Building Trades Council and the statewide Building Trades Council both endorsed him unanimously. I just think Gov. Holcomb has broad-based support and it's hard to get any traction against him."

A recent NBC/Survey Monkey Poll showed that 70% trust their governor during the pandemic. "During pandemic, Hoosiers have seen governor lead every day. They also see strength of his team," Hupfer said. "Even if they don't agree with him on every issue, they realize he works on best data he has in hand."

Hupfer pointed to the state's fiscal standing after taking what could be a \$2 billion revenue hit due to the pandemic. "Republicans have been steadfast in saving for a rainy day. No one could have predicted the pandemic. Now we are well-positioned for the back end of this. Nashville is talking about a property tax increase, but you're not hearing that here. He certainly has displayed a unique set of skills. People will see more of that in a second term."

Myers reacts to Lake Monroe incident

In response to the videos shared by Vauhxx Booker that document the stunning video of the racist attack in Monroe County, Democratic gubernatorial nominee Woody Myers, issued the following statement: "Racism and hate are ever-present threats to our civil society. As governor, I will push for real and meaningful hate crimes legislation that will get the job done to deter crimes motivated by hate. Linda and I will work for equal justice for all Hoosiers." Lieutenant governor nominee Linda Lawson said, "When will Gov. Eric Holcomb denounce this heinous act and finally acknowledge that the racism in his state will not stand?"

Myers/Lawson long-term care plan

Myers and Lawson announced their plan to overhaul long term-care in Indiana. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Indiana has again emerged as one of the worst states in the nation when it comes to nursing home quality of life and quality of care according to senior advocates. The Mike Pence and Eric Holcomb Administrations have allowed those in long-term care and their family members to go without the benefit of protections and transparency. Kentucky and Michigan have created task forces to help advocate for citizens in long-term care while Indiana is still lacking. "Unlike our neighboring states, Gov. Holcomb has failed to put our most vulnerable Hoosiers first," said Dr. Woody Myers. "Hoosiers need the long term care task force that nursing care experts have recommended." "The Legislature has allowed the nursing home industry to simply go unchecked," said Linda Lawson. "We need to hold this industry accountable and fix what the legislature and the governor have left undone."

General Assembly

3 can declare victory

The election isn't until November, but three new members of the General Assembly have already clinched victory (Berman, WIBC). Three nominees to replace retiring Democrats are now officially unopposed after the passing of a pair of deadlines for candidates to get on the ballot. Army veteran Renee Pack will be the new state representative on Indy's westside, replacing fellow Democrat Karlee Macer. Former Miss Indiana and ex-Monroe County Councillor Shelli Yoder (D) will be the new state senator from Bloomington, replacing Mark Stoops. And Maureen Bauer will replace her father Pat in a South Bend House seat, extending the Bauer family's 56-year hold on the seat. Burnett Bauer served in the House for six years before giving way to his son Pat, the future House speaker, in 1970. Monday was the deadline for Republicans, Democrats and Libertarians to fill any ballot vacancies. Republicans and Democrats added 11 candidates for House and Senate seats. That leaves nearly a third of the 125 House and Senate seats on the ballot uncontested. 13 Democrats, including Pack and Bauer, and 18 Republicans have clear paths to victory in the House. Yoder is one of six Democrats and three Republicans unopposed in the Senate.

Yoder reacts to Lake Monroe video

SD40 Democratic nominee Shelli Yoder said she was "horrified" over an attempted lynching at Lake Monroe last weekend. Video of the incident showed a group of white men restraining Vauhxx Rush Booker. "I don't want to recount this, but I was almost the victim of an attempted lynching," he posted on Facebook. "I don't want this to have happened to me or anyone. It hurts my soul, and my pride, but there are multiple witnesses and it can't be hidden or avoided. On July 4th evening others and me

were victims of what I would describe as a hate crime. I was attacked by five white men (with confederate flags) who literally threatened to lynch me in front of numerous witnesses." Yoder said on Facebook, "Friends, this happened last night – on Independence Day – in our community," Yoder said. "This is why Black Lives Matter. I am horrified. I am outraged. And sadly, I am not surprised. I stand with Vauhxx, and I echo his call for accountability. Please join me in calling for justice. There must be justice for Vauhxx. And there must be justice for Black lives in our community."

Elections

Lawsuit challenges election closing law

Thousands of Hoosiers are at risk of losing their right to vote this year if a 2019 Indiana statute limiting the legal options for remedying polling place problems on Election Day remains in effect, according to a federal lawsuit filed Wednesday (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Senate Enrolled Act 560 was signed into law following the 2018 Porter County election snafu that saw 12 polling places open up to 2½ hours late, absentee ballots not delivered to polling places, and a three-day delay in results being released. The law, approved by the Republican-controlled General Assembly and signed by Gov. Eric Holcomb, prohibits individual voters and political parties from seeking a court order to extend voting hours if there are problems at the polls. That prompted Common Cause Indiana to sue state and county election officials seeking to halt enforcement of the law. "Indiana voters who face problems voting on Election Day through no fault of their own should have a right to petition courts to extend polling place hours to ensure every eligible voter has a chance to make their voice heard," said Julia Vaughn, Common Cause Indiana policy director. "Indiana is the only state that has tied the voters' hands in this way."

Presidential 2020

COVID spike in Tulsa 2 weeks after rally

President Donald Trump's campaign rally in Tulsa in late June that drew thousands of participants and large protests "likely contributed" to a dramatic surge in new coronavirus cases, Tulsa City-County Health Department Director Dr. Bruce Dart said Wednesday ([AP](#)). Tulsa County reported 261 confirmed new cases on Monday, a one-day record high, and another 206 cases on Tuesday. By comparison, during the week before the June 20 Trump rally, there were 76 cases on Monday and 96 on Tuesday. Dart said those large gatherings "more than likely" contributed to the spike. "In the past few days, we've seen almost 500 new cases, and we had several large events just over two weeks ago, so I guess we just connect the dots," Dart said. ❖

Trump's malaise

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

NASHVILLE, Ind. – Forty-one years ago as the U.S. reeled from oil shocks and long lines of cars just to get gas, the conservative tabloid New York Post editorialized: "Independence Day, 1979, the American paradox is bleakly apparent. As a nation, we appear to have become steadily more dependent on forces seemingly beyond our control, losing confidence in our ability to master events, uncertain of our direction."

Out on the left coast, the Los Angeles Times observed: "The United States is now a victim of a loss of nerve and will, wracked by indecision and groping for a glimpse of inspirational and innovative leadership."

That was the precursor to what became known as President Jimmy Carter's "malaise speech." After disappearing for over a week, Carter told the nation in a televised address that July, "The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation."

That's where we are as a nation now. The invisible enemy is COVID-19, with cases up 82% from two weeks ago. The European Union, which has been reporting about 5,000 cases a day (compared to more than 60,000 in the U.S. on Tuesday) banned Americans from traveling there earlier this week. Dr. Anthony Fauci predicted 100,000 new cases a day as the nation is going "in the wrong direction."

A Pew Research Poll revealed that the share of the public saying they are satisfied with the way things are going in the country "has plummeted from 31% in April, during the early weeks of the coronavirus outbreak, to just 12%. Anger and fear are widespread."

Folks, this is due to an abject failure of leadership.

An overwhelming majority of Hoosiers and Americans spent three months staying home, keeping up with Grandma on the phone, and shuttering businesses in a crippling way. And what do we have to show for it?

Goldman Sachs estimated that widespread use of masks would save the American economy at estimated \$1 trillion. "There has to be a clear coherent sustained communication, and that has absolutely not happened," Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious diseases specialist at Vanderbilt University, told the New York Times. It's appalling that this pandemic has become political, over something as simple as the wearing of face mask, which President Trump equated to a "signal of disapproval" of him.

Vice President Mike Pence, who appeared at an indoor rally in Arizona last week with few in attendance

wearing masks or social distancing, said in another hotspot state in Texas, "Wear a mask wherever it's indicated or wherever you're not able to practice the kind of social distancing that would prevent the spread of the coronavirus." But it took Pence months to say that. And the coronavirus task force he heads has pretty much disappeared during this resurgence.

This inaction will come at a cost. Just as the NBA and Major League Baseball are beginning to gear up for restarted seasons later this month, the COVID resurgence is creating havoc in this sports-craving nation that has spent four plus months with only golf, auto racing and cornhole. A growing number of pros, including the Indiana Pacers' Victor Oladipo, are opting out of the restart. George Atallah of the NFL Players Association put it bluntly: "If you want football to start on time, wear a mask."

A spike in cases in Evansville this past week had health officials searching for answers. The Courier & Press reported on a Vanderburgh County Health Department probe of the outbreak: 64% – 37 of the new 58 infected individuals – were between the ages of 18 and 35; 16 of the 58 infected persons had traveled outside Indiana, with several visiting identified hotspots in Florida. "A large majority of these new cases reported to the health department that they were not wearing a fabric facial covering/mask when in public and they were not practicing social distancing," it stated.

When Fox News' Sean Hannity asked Trump what his priorities would be for a second term, he responded: "I always say talent is more important than experience. I've always said that. But the word experience is a very important word. It's a very important meaning. I never did this before; I never slept over in Washington. I was in Washington I think 17 times, all of the sudden, I'm the president of the United States. You know the story, I'm riding down Pennsylvania Avenue with our first lady and I say, 'This is great.' But I didn't know very many people in Washington, it wasn't my thing. I was from Manhattan, from New York. Now I know everybody. And I have great people in the administration. You make some mistakes, like you know an idiot like (John) Bolton, all he wanted to do is drop bombs on everybody. You don't have to drop bombs on everybody. You don't have to kill people."

President Carter knew he was in trouble when he gave his "malaise speech," which was initially well received before giving way to widespread skepticism and ultimately proved to be a harbinger of his landslide reelection defeat in 1980 to Ronald Reagan, who became the strongest president of the television age of American politics. And Trump? He seems oblivious. Last week, he actually said of the pandemic, "I think at some point I think it's going to disappear, I hope."

The critical question facing American voters today as the COVID death toll mounts is whether and how Joe Biden can frame what is missing at this moment: Cogent leadership and the ability to unite a frightened public. ❖



Sens. Braun, Young advocating ideas instead of opposing

By PETE SEAT

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana’s two United States senators, Mike Braun and Todd Young, whether they know it or not, are acolytes of Arthur Brooks. The former American



Enterprise Institute president regularly implored conservatives to shun negativity and instead articulate an aspirational agenda worthy of public servants – and of the people they serve.

“The key concept,” Brooks once told the Washington Post, “is fighting for people instead of fighting against things. The latter is oppositional; if you fight against things, people will see you as the minority, because

someone else is setting the agenda. To fight for people is to set the agenda, and that’s inherently majoritarian.”

Neither Braun nor Young is an angry Republican who only talks of “defending,” “protecting,” and “opposing.” Instead, they are out there ideating, proposing and advocating. Where some Republicans gave up on the ideas front at the federal level after Paul Ryan was crucified for attempting to bring solvency to entitlement programs, Braun and Young are courageous enough to actually present ideas and deal with whatever fallout may come.

Braun, through his acknowledgment of the challenge posed by climate and the necessity to honestly debate qualified immunity for law enforcement, is at the forefront of turning the tables in Washington. And Young, who also didn’t bide his time before turning to the job of legislating, teams up to offer bipartisan bills more often than Seinfeld ate cereal, while at the same time having the foresight to talk about the humanitarian crisis in Yemen before anyone else and more than anyone else.

Why is their willingness to stand out from the pack so important? “Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change,” economist Milton Friedman was known to have said. “When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function, to develop alternatives to existing politics, to keep them alive and available until the political impossible becomes the politically inevitable.”

Therefore, ideas like those brought forth by Braun and Young at bare minimum form a baseline for discussion and at maximum become the default position. Even so, it’s important to remember that not every bill is intended to become law. In fact, the famous “Schoolhouse Rock” song

only applies to three percent of bills introduced in Congress. Some of those meant for the trash heap are messaging bills used to force the opposing party into casting politically unpopular votes. And some, like Braun’s qualified immunity bill, are drafted with a longer-term goal in mind. In this version of reality, legislating is equal parts art and gamesmanship.

The art in Braun’s proposal could be a portrait painted by Arthur Brooks himself, in that Braun is giving Republicans looking for an idea to support, rather than something to oppose, a vehicle to stand behind if they so choose. The gamesmanship comes from the Friedman playbook. By putting on the table something Braun knows will fail in the short term, as Indianapolis Star columnist James Briggs put it, he “succeeded in becoming a key Republican voice on an issue that will almost certainly be addressed in the future.”

Braun said much the same himself in an interview with Fox News host Tucker Carlson when the senator barely got a word in edgewise. “If we’re not in the discussion, we’re going to be on the sidelines like we are on so many issues as conservatives because we fail to engage and [Democrats] run circles around us...[we can’t] always stand on the sidelines until it’s too late.” That “too late” is another way of saying when the “political impossible becomes the politically inevitable.”

Like a writer who edits and tweaks an idea before publishing a column, the long and winding road to a bill becoming law starts with an idea being placed on the table. The introduction of a bill is merely a starting point, not a final product. But getting to the end zone is a messy process that “has often been compared to sausage-making,” Braun reminded his audience in an open letter to Hoosier law enforcement last week. “Which sometimes is an insult to the sausage-making process.”

Although Braun and Young may not have the power to restore faith in the process of sausage-making (a pity, to be sure), they are restoring faith in the legislative process by having the audacity to stand up and offer ideas despite the guaranteed pushback within their own quarters. Therefore, in this with-us-or-against-us political environment where nuance is all but dead, it seems Braun’s only sin in introducing qualified immunity reform was a sin of commission. Social Security isn’t the only third rail of politics – so, too, is daring to have an idea. ❖

Pete Seat is a former White House spokesman for President George W. Bush and campaign spokesman for Dan Coats, former director of national intelligence and U.S. senator. Currently Seat is a vice president with Bose Public Affairs Group in Indianapolis. He is also an Atlantic Council millennium fellow, Council on Foreign Relations term member and author of the 2014 book, “The War on Millennials.”

Schmuhl on Buttigieg's presidential run

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Mike Schmuhl, campaign manager for Pete Buttigieg's presidential bid, answers questions here about that surprising race from nowhere to top-tier candidacy.

Q. Mike, when you and Pete began planning the campaign in that tiny office downtown, with only a couple of helpers, little funding and no standing in the polls, what chance did you think he had for the nomination?



A. You're right. Back then we didn't have much. At the same time, we didn't have that much to lose. The nominating process is such a long slog. I would say at the beginning we were thinking more in terms of week-to-week and month-to-month to build our effort. We felt

as though Pete's profile matched the moment, and that Democrats would take a good look at a candidate with different experiences and a futuristic vision of a more united America. And, many people did.

Q. The organization really grew. How big?

A. In South Bend, we had about 165 team members on two floors of the KeyBank building downtown. Across the country, we topped out at 575 full-time team members right before the Iowa caucuses.

Q. Was it a mistake to keep the headquarters in South Bend rather than moving to a bigger media center?

A. Not at all. The campaign felt right at home in South Bend, and "the Bend" became a primary characteristic of our campaign ethos. The Jefferson Boulevard Bridge inspired our logo, for example, and team members lived throughout the community in apartments, homes or supporter housing. It became a badge of honor that we punched above our weight against some big-city competitors. Plus, reporters followed Pete every day on the trail and they sent crews to South Bend for interviews. We never felt the need to be in a bigger city.

Q. If Pete's win in Iowa had been big news on election night, not obscured by those long counting delays, could he have won the nomination?

A. It's one of the biggest unknowns of the primary. We were banking on a catapult effect that night to boost our fortunes for subsequent contests. It's hard to say. There were still a lot of candidates in the mix, and Michael Bloomberg was capturing a lot of the media attention around that time because of his incredible amount of spending. Strangely, right now we're seeing election nights change across the country as we deal with the coronavirus. At the end of campaigning, we're at the mercy of disjointed (at worst) and delayed (at best) tabulations and

results.

Q. You saw the top Democratic candidates in action. Who were the most impressive?

A. Twenty-nine people ran for president on the Democratic side this cycle, and I was lucky enough to get the chance to see most of them up close. Before the Detroit debate, we even shared a backstage floor with Sen. Bernie Sanders, Montana Gov. Steve Bullock and Marianne Williamson, who was burning some incense in her space to get in the right mental zone before the debate. Most of them seemed to me incredibly impressive – even more so in person. Vice President Joe Biden and Dr. Jill Biden were always kind and gracious to us.

Q. Who would you like to see Biden pick for vice president?

A. I think Sen. Kamala Harris is the favorite at the moment, and she would be a formidable addition to the ticket. Florida Congresswoman Val Demings is also a really intriguing possibility. Remember in 2000 when Tim Russert declared: Florida, Florida, Florida?

Q. If Biden wins, do you think Pete will be in the Cabinet or some other top post?

A. Biden has said publicly that he wants Pete on the team in his administration, and I take him at his word. The former vice president also said he envisions himself as a bridge to the next generation of leaders. After the coronavirus crisis, all the economic shocks and the necessary calls for racial justice, we'll all need to move past Trumpism, to rebuild our society and bring people together. We really need to repair our standing in the world and return to some of our shared American ideals – and I hope that means way fewer tweets!

Q. Do you think Pete will someday be president?

A. He has many more presidential cycles to try. There's so much in politics that's out of your control. Pete certainly exhibited that he has many necessary presidential traits, and he has the discipline to handle the rough and tumble nature of a national campaign.

Q. OK, Mike, how about your future?

A. Right now, I'm working with a great group of people at Heartland Ventures. Heartland connects businesses in the Midwest, mainly in Indiana and Ohio, with new technology being developed on the coasts.

Q. Where will you live?

A. For the foreseeable future, I'll spend most of my time in South Bend. It's a great place to live, work and have fun. I just miss the South Bend Cubs!

Q. Will you ever again be involved full-time in a major campaign?

A. The beauty of political campaigns is their similarity to sports. You have the full, competitive season and then you have an off-season when you can recharge, reflect and learn some new things. Right now, you might say, I'm in the off-season, but you learn early on that you never say never. ❖

Colwell is a South Bend Tribune columnist.

The Chinese threat to America

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – If you could see an existential threat to the United States standing right before your eyes, would you personally take action to deal with it? I ask this question for two reasons. First, I believe that there is an existential threat to our country standing in plain view for all Americans and the world to see.



Second, this isn't a threat that can only be dealt with by our national intelligence apparatus or our military. The threat which we face does not require risking world war or nuclear annihilation. It is true that direct confrontation may be required to check our opponent, but each of us, as individuals, can do our part to defeat the plans of our enemy. And make no mistake about it,

this opponent is our enemy.

The worst enemy that we face today is the government of Communist China. China has made no secret of its goal to become the world's largest economy, to build a modern military that is both larger and more technologically superior to the United States, to expand its boundaries by bullying weaker neighbors and to dominate the world through a combination of economic, political and military coercion. China is well on its way to accomplishing its goals. History has repeatedly demonstrated that it is far better to deal with rogue nations at the inception of their bad behavior rather than waiting until your neck rests underneath their boot.

The truth is that while we've been sitting out the pandemic on the couch watching "The Tiger King," binge-watching Netflix or tearing down local businesses or monuments in the memory of George Floyd, our friends in China have been being naughty boys. For those of you who require the articles of indictment before you sign on to our war of resistance against this menace, I give you the following:

China has been aggressively building up its reef bases in the China Sea in an effort to expand its territorial waters. This policy basically involves taking a coral reef and then launching a major construction process to exchange the sea water around it for a military landing strip. In a further effort to expand its maritime influence, China has aggressively attacked Vietnamese and Indonesian fishing vessels. It has also sought to interfere with Malaysian oil drilling in their own territorial waters.

The muscle flexing doesn't stop at sea. Recently,

Chinese forces mercilessly attacked and murdered unarmed Indian troops in a de-militarized area of the Galwan Valley.

China also recently broke their 1997 Treaty on Hong Kong with Great Britain by passing legislation subjecting the people of the island appendage to the full power of Chinese laws, justice and punishments. Say goodbye to freedom of speech, assembly and the press. All of this was done while we worried about which professional athlete would or wouldn't take a knee.

China's conduct before and since the outset of the coronavirus outbreak has been nothing short of reprehensible. We now know that the first outbreak occurred as early as September 2019, but was not reported until late December. The scientist who discovered the Wuhan virus was imprisoned and gagged from sharing his information at a time when constructive action might have been taken. In addition, China continued to allow its citizens to fly its virus into every corner of the world, thereby guaranteeing a worldwide pandemic. Of course, one of the main sources of everything viral, the Chinese wet markets have been allowed to continue to operate without governmental interference.

China manipulated the World Health Organization's process to engineer Ethiopian Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus into the position of director general. It's helpful to note that Ghebreyesus is the first non-physician in the history of the organization. It is also helpful to understand how Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus gathered up the needed votes to become director general. He was the beneficiary of China's vast network of debt traps around the world. The Chinese strategy is simple; loan developing countries vast amounts of money derived from the enormous U.S. trade imbalance and then tell those same countries that if they want to continue to drink from the well that they need to demonstrate their friendship by supporting Chinese objectives. This strategy has left the rest of the world with a WHO director general who doesn't know a sigmoidoscope from a dog whistle.

As a dangerous portent of things to come, an Australian businessman recently reported that he had been recruited by Chinese intelligence to run for the Australian Parliament. China is reportedly poking its nose into elections around and interfering with malignant social media campaigns and other electronic means of interference. Our press and the Democrats have been harping for three years about Russia, Russia, Russia when all along it has been China, China, China.

When you add these recent Chinese transgressions to the ongoing pervasive Chinese spying, thefts of intellectual property, currency manipulation and state protections of the main Chinese with the capacity to damage Western economies, it all adds up to the fact that China is waging war by every means available.

While there are many actions that the United States can initiate or continue as a counterbalance to the aggressive actions of the Chinese government, there is

something that each and every American can do to stop China in its tracks.

Now, more than ever it is important for the United States to fully bring manufacturing back to our shores. Every American corporation that moved manufacturing to China to save a buck through cheaper wages, less governmental interference or lax or non-existent environmental laws should bring their factories home.

We can all encourage and speed up this process by making every effort to identify non-Chinese manufactured goods and purchase them instead of the poisonous fruit of cheap Chinese goods. I grant you that this will be difficult since China has monopolized the manufacturing of some goods. When you can't buy American, then for

goodness sakes buy non-Chinese.

In addition to my goal of reducing my purchase of Chinese goods, I'm going to write Sen. Mike Braun with an idea. I'm going to suggest that instead of him making the rounds of the news shows promoting his ridiculous law enforcement reform ideas, that the senator introduce a new law. The new law would require that every import from China would clearly state, "Warning: Purchase of this product is dangerous to the health of the United States and the safety of the world." It works on cigarettes, why not on cars, computers and toys? ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.

Facts are still facts

By **KELLY HAWES**

ANDERSON — The Facebook post seemed innocent enough. "Remember back in the day when facts were just facts and people didn't argue them because they were facts?" it read. "That was pretty cool."

I was inclined to agree, so I clicked the like button, and then someone else did and someone else, and before you knew it, the likes on that post had reached double digits.



Then came a comment. "Yes and I even remember when news was just the facts/news – and you formed your own opinion!!" the post read. "Good times. I miss Walter Cronkite."

I felt my profession under attack, and I struggled over how to respond. Or whether to respond at all. I see far too many people these days labeling the news media as biased.

Part of the problem is social media. Lots of things get shared on the various platforms, and it's not always obvious what is news and what is opinion.

Now and then someone responds to my column by accusing me of taking sides, and I have to shake my head. "I'm a columnist," I say. "Taking sides is what columnists do."

And let's be honest. No one is truly unbiased. We're all human beings, and we all have opinions. The best any journalist can do in pursuing a news story is to set any opinions aside and examine the story from multiple points of view. Cable news is part of the problem. The news itself is generally pretty straight-forward. Reporters usually do a pretty good job of laying out the facts without taking sides.

But then the talking heads step in, and the line

between commentary and news begins to blur. The hosts offer their own take, and then they bring in a panel of experts to provide analysis on the news of the day. Many of those experts have their own agendas, and even the journalists who reported the story find themselves in the middle of a partisan discussion. We could all do with less of that.

And then, of course, there's the adversarial role of the news media. A journalist's job is to ask questions the people in power don't necessarily want to answer. And when a politician dodges a question, good reporters will ask the question again. And again.

Sometimes journalists asking tough questions come off looking biased, but that bias generally is in favor of the taxpayer, the voter, the person that public servant ultimately works for. And journalists ask those questions every day. They do it not just in the White House and the halls of Congress, but at police stations and at city council meetings and at other places in communities large and small across the country.

Sometimes, stories those journalists produce are pretty simple. Other times they involve lots of digging and countless interviews. In the good old days when Walter Cronkite was giving us the evening news, the kind of in-depth reporting our democracy relies on came easier than it does today. Newspapers had bigger staffs, and many communities had more than one newspaper. Now, some communities have no newspaper at all. Print circulation is declining, and more and more people are convinced the news should be free.

It's a tough time to be a journalist, and the work often goes unappreciated. There's no question consumers should choose their news sources carefully. I feel obligated to point out, though, that facts are still facts, and we all still have the ability to form our own opinions. Anyone who tries to convince you otherwise is playing politics.

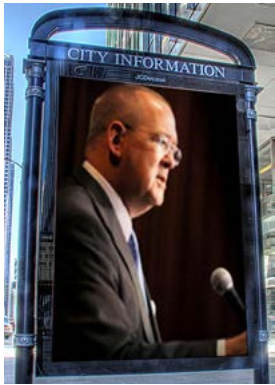
And that's a fact. ❖

Kelly Hawes is a columnist for CNHI News Indiana.

Trump's assault on prosperity continues

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE — After facing three weeks of withering criticism about new visa restrictions, the Trump Administration took the opportunity this week to further damage the U.S. economy. This time, the damage may be far more immediate and widespread, affecting hundreds of American cities, more than a million foreign college students and millions of U.S. workers.



With every American college and university considering fully online courses this fall, the Trump Administration announced it would revoke the visa of any foreign student enrolled in a school that will be doing online-only classes. As best I can tell, well over 90 percent of U.S. college students will take one or more online courses this fall. Nearly every American university will be a hybrid of online and in-person classes.

Should the disease spread, as it is now doing across much of the nation, many schools will drop in-person classes. This puts than a million foreign college students and their families at risk of deportation. Here's what that would do to the American economy.

Foreign college students are one of our largest export sectors. If this rule is actually enforced, even for a quarter of students, it would be the single worst loss of American exports since World War II. This policy will mean that, by Election Day, Mr. Trump will have worsened America's trade deficit more than any president in history.

The impact on the overall U.S. economy will be measurable, but with the economy already teetering on a depression, a few million more lost jobs will hardly be noticed. Where the pain of this decision will be most acutely felt is in college towns and in America's colleges and universities. Indiana is among the most at-risk states because we rank 10th nationally in foreign student enrollment.

This August, Indiana should have nearly 30,000 foreign students enrolling in our schools, spending more than a billion dollars in those communities. Part of our reliance on foreign students is due to the much-needed cash they bring our universities. Part is our state's excellent reputation internationally. Purdue is a global university, with a quarter of the student body from overseas. But, the reach is everywhere. In just the last decade, the modest research Center where I work has employed students from every continent except Antarctica. I've even had Nobel Laureates write letters of recommendation for prospective students. This reflects the excellence of Indiana's universi-

ties.

Indiana's universities are global entities, which now face losing a significant share of their student enrollment if they choose to spend a semester online to reduce the spread of COVID. And, make no mistake, even if the rule is softened, or doesn't actually get implemented, the fear alone will do lasting damage. Foreign student enrollment is sure to collapse this fall, and we should expect significant fallout.

The loss of a billion dollars across five or six Indiana cities is a cruel blow to local economies already reeling from COVID-19. This will plunge West Lafayette, Bloomington, South Bend, Muncie and Terre Haute into depression-level decline for two to five years. The impact is not just on spending and tuition, but also on many other university activities. This will slash college bond ratings, making any new construction financially almost impossible.

The badness of this policy is even more apparent when evaluating why this is pursued. Ken Cuccinelli, the 'temporary' director of citizenship services, plainly said that this policy is intended to force colleges and universities to re-open this fall in the face of COVID-19. Put more plainly, Mr. Trump is willing to do long-term damage to the American economy and risk more disease spread to force colleges and universities to open this fall. This is an amoral attempt to divert attention from his own clownish response to this pandemic.

Now, there may be readers who want universities to re-open this fall. I certainly do. But, do not confuse the desire for universities to re-open with a conservative or courageous temperament. It is neither.

If they value anything, conservatives respect the separation of power. Presidents do not have say in the opening of state or private universities. That at least what conservatives before 2017 believed. I believe it still. A presidential effort to force opening decisions on universities and other local activities, like schools, is counter to every element of principled conservatism refined over the past two centuries. But, hypocrisy is not the worse character flaw revealed by this policy.

What I learned as a young man, and as an infantry officer in peace and war, is that courage is not defined as asking others to endure risks without benefit. Likewise, courage demands an equal share of risk. If you are unwilling to live in a college dorm this fall, asking others to do so to help save your flagging electoral prospects is not courage. It is raw cowardice.

Many might be inclined to care little about the fate of universities and foreign students. But, be assured those most harmed by this policy will not be liberal, tenured professors. This policy is aimed directly at middle-class jobs in college towns.

Viewed across the vast spectrum of Mr. Trump's presidency, this would seem like a modest tantrum, limited in scope and effect. But, this policy runs counter to the most fundamental philosophies of American conservatism. It is deeply hypocritical for conservatives to remain silent. I

will not.

This policy is also cowardly, asking others to risk their health or education for short-term electoral sake. Mr. Cuccinelli and Mr. Trump would do well to note that courage is the first of all personal virtues, from which all others spring forth. This policy does have one deeply relevant value. As it is deeply hypocritical, serving only the cowardly aspirations of electoral success, it is perfectly repre-

sentative of the Trump Presidency. ❖

Michael J. Hicks, PhD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.

A shocking utility decision

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS — I salute the unexpected bravery of the Indiana Utilities Regulatory Commission. Knowing the lobbying to come, on June 29 the IURC rejected a request from a gaggle of Indiana electric utilities to charge customers for power not used because of the virus sequestration.



Now, to get this straight, think of your favorite restaurant. It has been closed for a while. Its revenues are down from what they might have been because you and other customers were not there.

Today, they are open, and their prices might be increased to make up for the revenue they did not get while they were closed. You could be charged for the meal and the beer you did not consume. Or you could go elsewhere.

Who should bear that loss? You? The restaurant workers? The suppliers? The owners? In the case of these monopolies, these utilities, it's no different. Except the customers are stuck. There is no convenient substitute today for electric service.

Batteries, solar power, wind power, a diesel generator? None is ready to be the full time supplier to most homes or businesses. The restaurant has competition. Your electric company is yours, regulated by people picked by people you elected. You don't like it? What can you do about it?

Who's going to pay the electric company for the power they did not sell? The customers, workers, shareholders? No! That loss belongs to management, that web of obfuscation, that cabal wearing the buttons: "Pass the buck."

"Why management?" you'll ask. Because they did not insure against the Covid19 virus or similar hits to revenue. If a tornado brings down power lines, are you asked to pay for power not used during an outage? No. You're obligated to pay for the power you use as shown on your meter, and

the ordinary costs of getting that power to you.

Management knows tornadoes are a possibility and can insure against the costs of restoring power. Or they can self-insure by having retained earnings to use if a storm strikes. That temporarily may reduce payouts to stockholders, but only if the funds are needed. It an understood risk of holding stock.

True, the Covid19 virus was not anticipated. But that's the idea of insurance, to cover expenses or lost revenue incurred from unexpected, yet possible events. You'll say, "Oh, but there's no experience with an epidemic like this. How could they insure against it?"


That's why insurance exists. I've never been in a serious auto accident, but I carry insurance against the costs I might have. "Yes, but auto accidents happen often and make it easier to set insurance rates," you'll object. Well, epidemics happen too, and regulated gamblers (insurance companies) can provide odds and make money on covering those odds.

"So, how can revenue losses be recovered from negligent management?" Ah. Now that's a question! ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com. Follow his views and those of John Guy on "Who gets what?" wherever podcasts are available or at mortonjohn.libsyn.com.

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

Sabato moves 5th CD into ‘tossup’ in blue wave suburb redux

By **KYLE KONDICK**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Well-educated suburban districts, particularly ones that also were diverse, were a major part of the Democrats’ victory in the House in 2018. Democrats captured many formerly Republican districts where Donald Trump performed significantly worse in 2016 than Mitt Romney had in 2012. Democratic victories in and around places like Northern Virginia, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, the Twin Cities, Atlanta, Orange County, CA, parts of New Jersey, and elsewhere came in seats that meet this broad definition.

And then there’s Texas. Democrats picked up two districts there, one in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex (TX-32) and another in suburban Houston (TX-7). But Democrats put scares into several other Republican incumbents, and the closeness of presidential polling in Texas could lead to unexpected opportunities for Democrats there this November.

Trump has generally led polls of Texas, but many have been close and Biden has on occasion led, like in a Fox News poll released last week that gave him a nominal lead of a single point.

Tellingly, of 18 Texas polls in the RealClearPolitics database matching Biden against Trump dating back to early last year, Trump has never led by more than seven points, in a state he won by nine in 2016. It seems reasonable to assume that Trump is going to do worse in Texas than four years ago, particularly if his currently gloomy numbers in national surveys and state-level polls elsewhere do not improve.

In an average of the most recent polls, Trump leads by two points in Texas. In 2018, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) won reelection over then-Rep. Beto O’Rourke (D, TX-16) by 2.6 points. If Trump were to win Texas by a similar margin this November, the congressional district-level results probably would look a lot like the Cruz-O’Rourke race.

Cruz carried 18 districts to O’Rourke’s 16. That includes the 11 districts the Democrats already held in Texas going into the 2018 election, as well as the two ad-

ditional ones where they beat GOP incumbents (TX-7 and TX-32) and three additional districts that Republicans still hold. Those are TX-23, an open swing seat stretching from San Antonio to El Paso; Rep. Michael McCaul’s (R, TX-10) Austin-to-Houston seat; and TX-24, another open seat in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

TX-23 is competitive primarily because it’s two-thirds Hispanic, and it already leans to the Democrats in our ratings. TX-10 and TX-24 better fit the suburban mold; both have significantly higher levels of four-year college attainment than the national average (particularly TX-24), and Republican incumbents in both seats nearly lost to unheralded Democratic challengers in 2018.

Cruz won the remaining districts, but several of them were close: TX-2, TX-3, TX-6, TX-21, TX-22, TX-25, and TX-31 all voted for Cruz by margins ranging from 0.1 points (TX-21) to 5.1 (TX-25). These districts all have at least average and often significantly higher-than-average levels

of four-year college attainment, and they all are racially diverse.

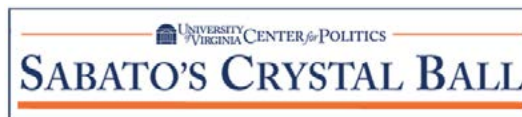
In other words, these districts share some characteristics of those that have moved toward the Democrats recently, even though they remain right of center.

This is all a long preamble to an alarming possibility for Republicans: If Biden were to actually carry Texas, he might carry many or even all of these districts in the process. In a time when ticket-splitting is less common than in previous eras of American politics (though hardly extinct), that could exert some real pressure on Republicans in these districts.

We already have several of these districts included in our House ratings. But we are moving four additional ones from Safe Republican to Likely Republican: Reps. Dan Crenshaw (R, TX-2), Van Taylor (R, TX-3), Ron Wright (R, TX-6), and Roger Williams (R, TX-25). They join Rep. John Carter (R, TX-31) in the Likely Republican category.

To be clear, we don’t really see any of them in immediate danger, and they certainly can and probably will run ahead of Trump in their districts -- just like they all ran ahead of Cruz in 2018 (they also likely will have the kind of resource edges that can help make this happen). The same can be said of Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) at the statewide level, who appears to be doing better than Trump in polls (although that may not last in the end).

Trump’s Texas sag in 2016 didn’t immediately imperil any



Member/District	Old Rating	New Rating
David Schweikert (R, AZ-6)	Likely Republican	Leans Republican
Katie Porter (D, CA-45)	Likely Democratic	Safe Democratic
CO-3 Open (Tipton, R)	Likely Republican	Leans Republican
IN-5 Open (Brooks, R)	Leans Republican	Toss-up
Antonio Delgado (D, NY-19)	Leans Democratic	Likely Democratic
Peter DeFazio (D, OR-4)	Safe Democratic	Likely Democratic
Brian Fitzpatrick (R, PA-1)	Likely Republican	Leans Republican
Dan Crenshaw (R, TX-2)	Safe Republican	Likely Republican
Van Taylor (R, TX-3)	Safe Republican	Likely Republican
Roger Williams (R, TX-25)	Safe Republican	Likely Republican
Ron Wright (R, TX-6)	Safe Republican	Likely Republican

Texas Republican U.S. House members, except for retiring Rep. Will Hurd (R) in the perpetually swingy TX-23; it took the 2018 midterm, when Trump's unpopularity led to big House losses for Republicans, to make many of these districts much more competitive. So it's possible that Biden could do really well, but not have strong-enough coattails in these and other similar kinds of districts. We also still like Trump's chances in Texas, despite the close polls.

However, if that changes -- and if Biden wins the state without much ticket-splitting -- there could be some unpleasant surprises down the ballot for Republicans in Texas. That could also include control of the Texas state House of Representatives, which might be in play if things get bad enough for Republicans this November.

Redistricting looms for 2021; at the very least, Republicans who currently control state government in Texas may have to dramatically re-draw the map to shore up incumbents whose safe seats have eroded over the course of the decade while also accommodating a few new House seats because of Texas' explosive growth. For Republicans, their gerrymander after the last census (albeit blunted a little by judicial intervention) made practical political sense, but demographic changes and coalition shifts pushed 20 of the 36 districts to vote more Democratic than the state in the 2018 Senate race. And if Democrats somehow win the state House, they will have a formal seat at the table in the redistricting process next year.

Other rating changes

Democrats and their allies have been releasing internal House polls at a way higher rate than Republicans in recent months -- this is something we touched on briefly in our Electoral College update last week.

It's fair to say, in our own experience, that Democrats sometimes have a habit of releasing internal polls more often than Republicans do. It is also fair to say that internal, partisan polls often have a bias, predictably, toward the side that releases them: FiveThirtyEight, in its polling analysis, has found a 4-5 point average bias toward

the side of the candidate/group that conducts the poll in the closing weeks of a campaign. Still, we do follow these polls, and if one side is releasing a whole lot more polls than the other side, it may be a sign that they feel better about their numbers.

According to FiveThirtyEight, which keeps track of all polls (including internals), Democrats or their allies have released 18 House internal polls since the start of May (with most of them coming within the last couple of weeks), while Republicans have released only four, and two of them released in June were very old.

Not all of the Democratic polls showed Democrats leading; a few were in districts we rate as Safe Republican where the Democratic candidate was down mid-to-high single digits.

'Shocking' 5th CD poll

Another one of the shocking Democratic polls, released earlier this week, was in the open seat IN-5, held by retiring Rep. Susan Brooks (R). This is another high-education suburban seat that contains suburbs and small-town areas north of Indianapolis. It has some similarities to Rep. Troy Balderson's (R) OH-12, a district that hosted a very competitive special election two summers ago.

Trump carried the district 52%-41% in 2016, down from Romney's 58%-41% victory in 2012. Two years later, Sen. Joe Donnelly (D-IN) very narrowly carried the district even as he was losing to now-Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN) statewide. Christina Hale (D), a former state legislator who was the Democrats' 2016 lieutenant gubernatorial nominee, will face state Sen. Victoria Spartz (R), who won a fairly nasty primary a few weeks ago. The Democrats had Biden up an eye-popping 10 points in the district, and had Hale leading 51%-45%. Even if those are overly rosy numbers for Democrats -- and they probably are -- we do think it's hard to give the GOP a clear edge in an open-seat race in a district like this anymore. IN-5 moves from Leans Republican to Toss-up. ❖



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Peter Nichols, *The Atlantic*: In private moments, Donald Trump has told aides that he rescued Mike Pence from a potentially embarrassing defeat by pulling him out of a tough reelection bid in the 2016 Indiana governor's race and putting him on the ticket, a former White House official told me. Now it's Vice President Pence's turn to see what, if anything, he can do to rescue Trump from a more momentous loss — and keep alive a long-held ambition to win the presidency in his own right. Their fates, at this point, are wholly entwined. Pence would have trouble winning in 2024 if voters repudiate Trump in November. Yet even if he runs after a second Trump term, he'd surely be tarnished by the rolling tragedies of 2020. For three years, Pence largely sidestepped Trump's unending dramas. Not so with the pandemic. Trump pulled Pence from the bubble wrap and plunked him into a crisis, making him the head of the coronavirus task force overwhelmed by COVID-19's relentless spread. Now Pence is forever tied to the government's botched response. And that's something he'll need to defend and explain as the current campaign ramps up, and if he ever runs for the higher office he's long prized. "You get the Trump stink on you, it's hard to get it off," said the former official, who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to talk more freely.



For the moment, Pence needs to help salvage a campaign whose prospects look bleak. Trump has made the race a referendum on him. Part of Pence's role is convincing voters that there's something in it for them. In the coming months, he will spend several days a week visiting crucial swing states, a campaign adviser told me. Pence will approach each state as if he's running to be its governor, zeroing in on local issues important to voters' daily lives, the adviser said, and he'll try to showcase the federal grants and other benefits the Trump administration has dished out. If there's an organizing theme to Pence's vice presidency, it's that he must never offend a man whose emotional antennae quiver at any slight. That means he's perennially validating a president who insists the pandemic is under control when reality screams that it's not. Privately, he is under no illusions about the crisis, people who work with him have told me. "He never shoots the messenger," one member of the task force said. Pence knows it's important to wear masks; he grasps that the virus is a serious public-health threat; and he appreciates the governors who have played a prominent role in combatting the disease, the people who've worked with him told me.

I asked the task-force member why, at times, Pence hasn't worn a mask in public to model responsible behavior. Is it because he doesn't want Trump to see and take umbrage? "That's the only reason," this person said. "He'll wear it in a microsecond. He doesn't want to egregiously look like he's opposing the president." After Pence won an Indiana congressional race in 2000, he would meet with Rob Schenck, an evangelical minister, and pray and read scripture together. Schenck sees two warring and unresolved dimensions of Pence's personality, ambition

and altruism, and says that one seems to be crowding out the other. "If he were to seek pastoral counseling from me, I would say to him, 'Brother Mike, Jesus commands you to love your neighbor, not love your boss,'" says Schenck, who plans to vote for Biden. "That's not God's command."

A couple of years ago, Schenck sent a letter to Pence after seeing him at a swearing-in ceremony for Sam Brownback, the administration's ambassador for international religious freedom. In the letter, Schenck cited the commandment that warns against bearing false witness. "I conveyed in the letter that that was one of the greatest failures of this administration: truth-telling," Schenck told me. "I was trying to say to him, 'You need to be a truth-teller.'" He never got a reply.

Jason Kelly, *Notre Dame Magazine*: Joe Kernan and his friends used to have euchre nights. Years ago, when fellow University of Notre Dame alumnus Dick Nussbaum was getting to know Kernan, and just learning the game, he found himself playing against the future South Bend mayor and Indiana governor, the political leader he would serve as a trusted legal adviser. With the advantages of an experienced partner and good cards, Nussbaum the novice won. Losing didn't sit well with Kernan, who said, "A gorilla could have played those hands," an expression of the ravenous competitiveness that rec league softball opponents and umpires, golf partners — even fellow prisoners of war in Vietnam — have witnessed. Kernan, a Navy flight officer, was shot down over North Vietnam in 1972 and spent the next 11 months in Hoa Lo Prison — the "Hanoi Hilton." Tom Cuggino '68 recalls thinking that, if anyone could endure life as a POW, it would be Kernan, his former Notre Dame baseball teammate. "Because he'll make some sort of a game out of it and beat them," Cuggino says in a 2019 Legends of Michiana public television special. He came up with a game to play against cellmate Lynn Guenther, an Air Force pilot, before they went to sleep. They would ask each other insignificant questions — trivia — another distraction from interminable days and nights in captivity. Arcana from *The Guinness Book of World Records*, which Kernan had pretty much committed to memory, became his competitive advantage. He deployed questions like: "What's the world's record for spitting?" Guenther, naturally, had no idea. "Needless to say, I owed him 42 cases of beer when I came home," Guenther said. The tears pooling in Guenther's eyes make it clear he holds no grudge. Instead he describes himself as the luckiest possible POW because he shared a cell with Kernan. People across the many intertwined strands of Kernan's life share similar sentiments. Kernan's voice will not be heard here. That's in part because he would never say the things about himself, or tell the stories of resolve and sacrifice, that those closest to him know to be true. But it's also because Alzheimer's has robbed Kernan, 74, of the ability to speak. So they speak for him, as he raised his voice on their behalf for decades in public life. ❖

Indiana positivity rate rises to 5.9%

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's positivity rate for the COVID-19 virus is rising — an indication the novel coronavirus is spreading in the state (Kelly, [Fort Wayne Journal Gazette](#)). While the death rate has slowed, hospital admissions are also increasing. State Health Commissioner Dr. Kris Box said ideally the state would like a positive rate for the tests to be less than 5%. And the state had a seven-day rolling average of 4.1% as of mid-June. But the rolling average has now risen to 5.9%, and the single-day positivity rate for July 4 was 6.4%. "That can be a sign that we are seeing more actual outbreaks, more actual cases — not just related to the number of people we are testing," Box said. She also warned Hoosiers not to bank on society gaining herd immunity through vast infections. "The concern there is that it doesn't matter how many people we expose we are not going to probably develop that herd immunity," she said. Gov. Eric Holcomb added that both herd immunity or a vaccine are far away and between now and then people are getting sick and dying. He encouraged Hoosiers to focus on their conduct. The news came during Wednesday's media briefing, in which 455 new cases and 15 new deaths were reported statewide.



Mask mandate begins in Indy today

INDIANAPOLIS — Marion County's mask mandate starts Thursday—and people who refuse to comply may be subject to a fine up to \$1,000 ([IBJ](#)). Last week, Mayor Joe Hogsett and Dr. Virginia Caine signed a public health order mandating the use of face masks beginning Thursday in Marion County to fight against the spread of COVID-19. People will be required to wear masks when around others indoors, including

inside workplaces where employees do not have their own offices. They won't be required inside homes, but masks will be required outdoors when it is not possible to socially distance. But the mandate won't be enforced by the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department since it's a public health order. Rather, staff members of the health department will be enforcing the mandate.

Evansville Council eyes mask mandate

EVANSVILLE — Three members of the Evansville City Council have introduced an ordinance mandating face coverings in most situations, with violators subject to a fine (Martin, [Evansville Courier & Press](#)). If passed, the ordinance would remain in effect until expiration of the COVID-19 emergency declaration by Gov. Eric Holcomb. Ordinances generally require two readings for passage, and the face mask ordinance is scheduled only for first reading at the next scheduled City Council meeting, at 5:30 p.m. July 13 in Room 301 of the Civic Center. The ordinance states that, with specified exceptions, "all persons age six (6) years old and above who are present within the jurisdiction of the City of Evansville are required to wear a clean Face Mask any time they are, or will be, in contact with other people who are not household members in public or private indoor spaces."

Kernan suffers from Alzheimer's

INDIANAPOLIS — Former Indiana Gov. Joe Kernan has lost the ability to speak due to Alzheimer's disease and is living in a care facility, according to a report confirmed by his former press secretary Wednesday (AP). Kernan, 74, was diagnosed with the form of dementia several years ago, Tina Noel, who was Kernan's gubernatorial press secretary, told The Associated Press Wednesday. Kernan's wife, Maggie, has only been

able to see him through a fence from the patio of his care facility, reminding her of his time as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, according to a Notre Dame Magazine article posted online Tuesday. "When I see him like that, I think, 'You've always wanted your freedom,'" Maggie Kernan said. Her husband spent 11 months as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam after his Navy reconnaissance plane was shot down.

Holcomb defends DNR in probe

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb defended the state's Department of Natural Resources on Wednesday amid criticism that the agency's conservation officers did not adequately respond to the reported assault of a Black man by a group of White men at a southern Indiana lake last weekend (AP). Holcomb said during a news conference that DNR law enforcement officers acted according to protocols and made "the right decision," despite no arrests being made at the scene. "I'm proud of the DNR and the way they've conducted themselves," Holcomb said. "They've done everything right, by the book. It'll be handled correctly and was from the very outset."

Buttigieg book 'Trust' in fall

NEW YORK — Pete Buttigieg's next book has a unifying message. Liveright Publishing announced Wednesday that the former Democratic presidential candidate and South Bend mayor had written "Trust: America's Best Chance," scheduled for release Oct. 6 (AP). According to Liveright, the book combines history and personal reflections in an "urgent and soul-searching" exploration into creating a stronger democracy. "In order for our country to move forward in the years ahead, it will be more important than ever to build trust — trust in our institutions and leaders, trust in each other, and trust around the world in America itself," Buttigieg said.