

Trump's presidency collapses

Sedition, acrimony, fallout with Pence and impeachment mark his 11th hour

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – In six days, America's experiment with Donald Trump's reality show presidency comes to an end. It hasn't been pretty, particularly since he lost his reelection bid by seven million votes and a 306-232 Electoral College margin.

There have been 376,000 COVID-19 deaths at a rate surpassing 4,000 a day. The 20 million vaccines that were supposed to end up in American arms by the end of 2020 didn't make it past nine million. There were 141,000 jobs lost in December. There was a terror bombing in downtown Nashville that Trump ignored. And then came Jan. 6, when a "Stop the Steal" rally commenced at the Ellipse with the White House as a backdrop,



centered around "the big lie," which in Trump's spin was actually his "landslide" victory stolen in a "rigged" election.

In a Hollywood-esque scene that would have made "Network's" tormented anchor Howard Beal proud, Trump ignited the fuses of thousands of MAGA supporters,

Continued on page 3

A song of sedition

By **JOSHUA CLAYBOURN**

EVANSVILLE – Democracy requires the consent of losers. For over 220 years American democracy prided itself on peaceful transfers of power; and in all of that time, no president who lost an election sought to subvert the will of voters and reject Electoral College results – until Donald Trump.

Despite a massive pandemic and faltering economy, Trump's post-election focus remained firmly on overturning election results and undermining the democratic system he swore to defend. For weeks Trump spawned and repeated lies and unfounded conspiracy



“As someone who did not support objections to the certification last week, I will not support the political charade today. Congress should stop playing divisive politics.”

- U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz, joining her eight GOP Indiana House colleagues in opposing impeachment.



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Jack E. Howey
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theories about faulty voting machines and destroyed or fabricated ballots; allegations without evidence and allegations universally rejected in over 60 court cases, many presided over by Trump-appointed judges. But with repetition and time, many of Trump's supporters believed the lies; in their eyes his victory became a landslide and those who denied it were either naive or part of a vast conspiracy.

Trump used these false election-fraud allegations to justify his lawlessness. "When you catch somebody in a fraud, you're allowed to go by very different rules," he argued. "You don't concede when there's theft involved. Our country has had enough. We will not take it anymore."

Trump's attempt to undermine and overturn the national election not only shattered norms and traditions, but also sowed seeds for insurrection, violence, and civil unrest by his supporters, saying it comes from a love of country. On the very day Congress planned to certify the 2020 presidential election results, Trump told supporters, "If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore," and then told the crowd to head to the Capitol to deliver that message. Immediately mobs descended on the Capitol, the world's greatest symbol of self-government, in a violent crescendo of Trump's coup attempt.

Insurrectionists broke into the Capitol and murdered police, smashed windows, smeared feces on walls,

and destroyed property, even in the House and the Senate chambers and congressional offices. Fortunately staffers rescued Electoral College ballots from the Senate floor before the mob could burn them. Yet for all of the tyranny perpetrated by Trump and his supporters, the coup attempt revealed pathetic emptiness. As at many Trump rallies and online forums, the Capitol insurrection featured dazed men wandering around carrying Confederate flags, repeating outlandish conspiracies, and wearing furs, Viking horns, and face paint.

Rather than leading a mighty revolt – like Julius Caesar or Napoleon – Trump led a vicious pack of performance artists unable to achieve any significant success. As a result, many viewed Trump's coup attempt not as a constitutional crisis, but rather mere ego doomed by incompetence and institutional opposition. Rather than condemn the Capitol attack, Trump embraced it. As his supporters stormed the Capitol, Trump initially rebuffed requests to mobilize the National Guard, requiring intervention from White House officials to summon them. When House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy implored Trump to denounce the mob, he refused.

Later, after lawyers warned Trump of prosecution for incitement, he asked his followers to go home. Even then Trump insisted that his enemies provoked supporters, enemies who "viciously stripped away"

his "landslide election victory." In a recorded message after the attacks, Trump condemned Vice President Mike Pence for certifying legitimate election results, encouraged the coup by once again calling the election fraudulent, and told his insurrectionists, "We love you. You're very special."

Thus, the alleged leader of the free world encouraged and condoned the first breach of the U.S. Capitol since the British stormed it in 1814 during the War of 1812. Well before the Capitol revolt, however, Trump signaled his embrace of tyranny and violent mobs. Repeatedly he instructed his followers to wage war, disregard legal constraints, and overturn Trump's electoral loss by any means necessary. He welcomed violent supporters to silence protesters at rallies and signaled that any election defeat would be illegitimate. He refused to agree to a peaceful transition of power and told the Proud Boys, a far-right street militia, to "stand back and stand by."

Trump fumed and lied, day after day, that his legitimate election loss was fraudulent and unjust. At a rally

in Georgia before the Capitol attack, Trump said of Democrats, "They're not taking this White House. We're going to fight like hell." The storming of the Capitol, then, proved merely the crescendo of a long-running song of sedition – of treason – against the United States government.

Donald Trump's style and philosophy, if we can call them such, lack comparison in United States history. When we blithely mock our own systems with tribal glee, when we destroy institutions, when we take political pleasure in zero-sum fights, when we desecrate rule of law, we must remember that brutality and wilderness may ensue.

Donald Trump's failings as both the head of state and head of government created an unprecedented assault on American liberty, equality, democracy, and respect for law. As he departs from office, Trump holds one distinction only: America's worst president. ❖

Claybourn is a Republican practicing law in Evansville.

Trump, from page 1

sending them "mad as hell" to the U.S. Capitol, where an "insurrection" (in the words of U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney and President George W. Bush) aimed at preventing certification of Trump's Electoral College loss. It cost six lives, including Capitol policeman Brian Sicknick, who was bludgeoned to death, and resulted in Trump's second impeachment in the House.

As Vice President Pence was hiding in a "secure location" from a violent mob of Trump supporters in the U.S. Capitol, Trump supporters with zip ties chanted "Hang Mike Pence" and asked for the whereabouts of Speaker Nancy Pelosi. President Trump tweeted at 2:24 p.m., "Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country and our Constitution, giving States a chance to certify a corrected set of facts, not the fraudulent or inaccurate ones which they were asked to previously certify. USA demands the truth!"

In American "days that will live in infamy," we now have "1/6" joining "9/11" and Dec. 7, 1941. For the first time since Puerto Rican terrorists shot up the House in 1954, the U.S. Capitol had been breached. Before that, it was the British invasion in 1814.

The New York Times reported: President Trump "set Mike Pence up that day by putting it on his shoulders," said Ryan Streeter, an advisor to Pence when he was the governor of Indiana. "That's a pretty unprecedented thing in American politics. For a president to throw his own vice



president under the bus like that and to encourage his supporters to take him on is something just unconscionable in my mind."

Pence was already in his motorcade to the Capitol when Trump inflamed the crowd against his vice president, according to NYT. When the mob burst into the building, Secret Service agents evacuated Pence and his wife and children, first to his office off the floor and later to the basement. His agents urged him to leave the building, but he refused to abandon the Capitol, a similar stance Rep. Pence had taken on Sept. 11, 2001, when Flight 93 was barreling toward the Capitol. Once secured, Pence spoke with congressional leaders, the defence secretary and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — but not the president.

U.S. Sen. Todd Young, a former Marine intelligence officer, called the Jan. 6 insurrection the result of "a failure for many of our leaders to be truthful to the American people about what precisely has happened in our elections in recent months." Asked by the IndyStar if President Trump played a role in encouraging the violence, Young responded, "Of course. He's president of the United States."

Added Hoosier Republican U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon, "I cannot condone this dangerous rhetoric by the president. Yesterday, the United States changed. Words have meaning and many of the president's supporters took him literally, resulting in the attempted insurrection."

That Donald Trump's presidency is ending in chaos and insurrection; that he threw Vice President Pence under the proverbial bus when the Hoosier wouldn't go along with this coup d'état was entirely predictable. Scores of

business partners and contractors have experienced that part of the on-going Trump reality show

It came to a head when Trump confronted Pence in the Oval Office, with the New York Times reporting the president told his veep, "You can either go down in history as a patriot, or you can go down in history as a pussy."

Using that crude term was ironic, conjuring the first crisis to hit their relationship following the October 2016 release of the "Access Hollywood" audio tape where Trump bragged to Billy Bush

how a famed mogul could grab women "by their pussy." That incident reportedly had Pence scheming with then Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus on replacing Trump at the top of the ticket. When Mrs. Trump showed up at his first debate with Hillary Clinton wearing a fuschia pussy bow, it had some of us wondering if the nation was actually being punked. That Trump (with the help of Pence who beseeched Republicans to "come home") pulled off the

most stunning upset in American history a few weeks later gave the billionaire's reality show a four-year lease at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

Anyone surprised that President Trump's presidency is ending in this chaotic way either not been paying attention or (more likely) has been in deep denial over what we've witnessed over the last five years, reaching the violent crescendo last week. That deep denial stems from fear of the slice of the population that takes Trump literally. If Dear President says the election was rigged and stolen, it must be true. The lamestream media can just f--- off.

This comes as local news media has been collapsing, while its national counterparts have been condemned by Trump as "enemies of the people" spinning "fake news." Former Trump aide Kellyanne Conway formulated a new oxymoron, "alternative facts," which must have the late Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan ("Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts") spinning in his grave.

Trump has been lying about everything for years, about things he didn't have to lie about, and about how the 2020 election was "stolen" since Nov. 4. He has been enabled by Vice President Pence and members of the Indiana delegation until Wednesday's repugnant events finally pulled off the final facade of legitimacy. Unfortunately, his continued cries of a "stolen election" has been embraced by a number of members of Congress, and has the potential to metastasize into the body politick by Trump's core supporters.

The FBI is now warning of "armed demonstra-

tions" at the 50 state capitols, as well as Washington, by Trump loyalists between Jan. 16 and President-elect Joe Biden's inaugural. And this has set off speculation about how the Trump reality show could metastasize into a low grade insurgency, something we associate with Iraq or Vietnam.

Veteran investigative reporter Ron Suskind observed Trump's 80 million Twitter followers (before the president of the United States was banned from that

platform for inciting violence), and some 15 million fanatics could follow their leader into the streets, into the countryside. Writing of a stolen election scenario in an Oct. 30, 2020, New York Times op-ed, Suskind warns, "If the streets then fill with outraged people, he can easily summon, or prompt, or encourage troublemakers among his loyalists to turn a peaceful crowd into a sea of mayhem. They might improvise on their own in sparking violence, presuming it pleases their leader."

While some point to 20th Century fascist uprisings in Italy and Germany and wonder how

cultured people succumbed to the venom of would-be autocrats, an unexplored historic parallel might be China. In August 1966, Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao came to believe that his party and nation were headed in the wrong direction; that impurities existed, quelling the revolutionary fervor that had existed since 1949 before his cataclysmic "Great Leap Forward" commenced in 1958, resulting in famine and economic contraction.

Before a Central Committee Plenum, Mao launched what would become known as the "Cultural Revolution." He closed schools, set off a massive youth mobilization aimed at taking leaders to task for embracing "bourgeois values." Red Guards were formed, violently attacking the nation's elderly and intellectuals, taking aim at the "four olds: Old customs, old culture, old habits, old ideas." A cult of personality formed around Mao, as the Red Guards sacked party offices and murdered recalcitrants. Millions of people were forced into reeducation camps.

A YouGov Poll revealed that 45% of Republicans backed storming the U.S. Capitol. A Ipsos/Axios Poll showed 80% of Republicans oppose removing President Trump from office prior to Jan. 20. Six shots were fired into the Tippecanoe County Democratic HQ in downtown-Lafayette. Chairwoman Heather Maddox told the Lafayette Journal & Courier: "It's outrageous that it's got to this point. It's got to stop."

And Republican Posey County Councilman Aaron Wilson said in a Facebook posting last week: "I say we storm the capital (sic) again next week! These lying, cheating, no-good politicians need to learn that the only



reason we've had peace in this country for many years is because we've had elected leaders willing to put their party and their ethics above themselves. I do not believe this is the last of the violence we will see and the spineless nincompoops in Washington, D.C., have no one to blame but themselves!"

Then there was the plot to kidnap, try and execute Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer last summer, and the exhortation of Fox & Friends's Brian Kilmeade, who blamed Speaker Pelosi for initiating Trump's second impeachment, saying this past week, "This country is ready to explode. You saw what happened. You see the anger that the 74 million people feel."

As for Vice President Pence, he is not unlike A.J. Foyt steering through the 1964 Indianapolis 500 smoke, fire and wreckage that claimed the lives of two of his fellow drivers. He received a bipartisan standing O when he announced at 3:40 a.m. on Jan. 7 that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were really, really elected president and vice president. "We're very lucky that Mike Pence is a decent guy and rational and levelheaded," Joe Grogan, the former head of the Domestic Policy Council under Trump, told the Washington Post. "If he had been replaced by someone as nuts as the people who have been surrounding the president as the primary advice-givers for the last few months, we could have had even more of a bloodbath. Imagine what would have happened if Pence was devious and vile and didn't stand up for the Constitution."

The American experiment in democracy is fragile. Our wise Founding Fathers set up a system of institutions that appear to have held, though Trump's consistently corrosive lying has weakened them.

What I continue to wonder about is how very smart and dedicated Republicans like Mike Pence, Todd Young, Mike Braun, Jackie Walorski and Jim Banks went along with Trump's lying and lack of values for so long. The obvious answer is Trump's magnetic populist pull with the GOP masses and his use of Twitter that could easily turn up primary challengers. As parents, they didn't teach their children to lie, cheat and steal. As public officials working their way up the political food chain, they didn't lie to their constituents, allies and foes or work to subvert the will of the people.

As a civilized people, we have rejected liars and sore losers . . . until Donald Trump's reality show presidency.



Cheney cites Trump's 'betrayal'

For the second time, impeachment proceedings have begun in the U.S. House against President Trump, a week before he is scheduled to leave office. But this time is different. Democrats charge that Trump led an "insurrection" against the United States after Trump goaded a MAGA rally to overwhelm the U.S. Capitol, killing at least six people.

U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney announced she would vote for impeachment, saying, "The President of the United States summoned this mob, assembled the mob, and lit the flame of this attack. Everything that followed was his doing. None of this would have happened without the president. The president could have immediately and forcefully intervened to stop the violence. He did not. There has never been a greater betrayal by a president of the United States of his office and his oath to the Constitution." Nine other Republicans followed. And Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell believes Trump has committed an "impeachable offense," telling the New York Times there's a 50/50 chance he would vote to convict.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who was expecting to lose 10 to 20 Republicans on the impeachment vote, said President Trump "should have immediately denounced the mob when he saw what was unfolding," adding, "Quell the brewing unrest, and ensure President-elect Biden is able to successfully begin his term."

This comes as Vice President Pence, despite his "ruptured" relationship with Trump and reportedly tiring of his boss's "bullshit," declined to invoke the 25th Amendment on Tuesday. "I do not believe that such a course of action is in the best interest of our nation or consistent with our Constitution," Pence wrote in a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Trump defended his Jan. 6 speech that provoked the mob. "People thought that what I said was totally appropriate," Trump said in Alamo, Tex., on Tuesday. "The 25th Amendment is of zero risk to me, but will come back to haunt Joe Biden and the Biden administration. As the expression goes, be careful of what you wish for. It's causing tremendous anger and division and pain far greater than most people will ever understand, which is very dangerous for the USA, especially at this very tender time."

But as the House impeachment debate began on Wednesday, Trump issued this statement: "In light of reports of more demonstrations, I urge that there must be NO violence, NO lawbreaking and NO vandalism of any kind," Trump said in the statement, which was first report-

ed by Fox News. "That is not what I stand for, and it is not what America stands for. I call on ALL Americans to help ease tensions and calm tempers. Thank You."

House votes 232-197 in impeach Trump

Ten Republicans – none from Indiana – voted to impeach President Trump on Wednesday. Indiana's two Democrats voted with the majority.

■ **U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz** said, "I appreciate a variety of opinions, but any accusations must go through the proper due process, whether it is election fraud or an impeachable offence," said Rep. Spartz. "As someone who did not support objections to the certification last week, I will not support this political charade today. The rule of law and due process are vital to what our Constitutional Republic stands for. Congress should stop playing divisive politics and start working on delivering good policies for the American people."

■ **U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski** said, "In the wake of a divisive election and last week's horrific attack on the U.S. Capitol, Congress should be entirely focused on uniting the American people and strengthening our country. Impeaching the president with less than a week left in his term will not advance either of these goals. President Trump has pledged an orderly transition to President-elect Biden's administration, and I call on all Americans to support this effort by remaining peaceful and rejecting all violence. Anyone who commits violent or destructive acts will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law."

■ **U.S. Rep. Jim Banks** said on Facebook: "Right now, I'm headed to the House floor to vote against impeachment. The Democrat party is dividing America when we should be doing everything we can to unite the country." He told WPTA-TV, "I and many others have called for a bipartisan commission to study the activities of what happened a week ago on January 6th ... why security was so weak at the capitol that allowed it to happen and find out who's responsible and then we can take action from there."

■ **U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon** said on Twitter: "Dems proceeding with a partisan impeachment is both divisive and honestly, dangerous. Tensions and passions in the country are running high. This action by the Dems will throw fuel on the fire. Calling for unity and then taking this divisive action shows their hypocrisy."

■ **U.S. Rep. Greg Pence** said on Twitter: "The President has made it clear he will support a peaceful transfer of power to President-elect Joe Biden. It's time to move on and focus on what truly helps the American people: recovering from COVID-19 and restoring our economy."

■ **U.S. Rep. André Carson** explained, "It was a sad but necessary duty today to vote to impeach the president, again. But I swore an oath to protect and defend our Constitution, and our democracy. That means Donald Trump must be removed from office before he

does more damage, or more lives are endangered, or lost. It is encouraging the vote to impeach today was a bipartisan majority of the People's House, it encouraged me to see some of my Republican colleagues stand up and do the right thing for our country. Unfortunately, some of those who voted against impeachment today, justified their failure to act by saying it would cause more division. But they deliberately ignore the division inflamed by Donald Trump and their blind fealty to his baseless claims of election fraud."

■ **U.S. Rep. Frank J. Mrvan** tweeted, "I support the article of impeachment so that we can move forward and do the work that our constituents sent us here to do."

Republicans who voted for impeachment included House Republican Conference Chair Liz Cheney (Wyo.), Rep. Anthony Gonzalez (Ohio), Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (Wash.), Rep. John Katko (N.Y.), Rep. Adam Kinzinger (Ill.), Rep. Peter Meijer (Mich.), Rep. Dan Newhouse (Wash.), Rep. Tom Rice (S.C.), Rep. Fred Upton (Mich.) and Rep. David Valadao (Calif.)

Hoosier senators mum & missing

HPI reached out to U.S. Sen. Todd Young, a key lieutenant of Sen. McConnell, to see where he stands. No word. WFIE-TV has staked out U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, who initially backed the Jan. 6 Electoral College challenge before backing off after the insurrection, and reported: "Since the Monday before the attack, 14 News has attempted to get a response from the senator repeatedly to explain his reasoning for his reversal, as well as to ask why he felt his objection needed to be withdrawn to put distance between the nation and the attack. Meanwhile, 14 News went to his hometown of Jasper. There, we asked his wife about the matter, and she said she would pass the request on to Senator Braun."

Trump takes stand v. violence

President Trump on Wednesday: "I want to be very clear: I unequivocally condemn the violence that we saw last week," said Trump adding "no true supporter" of his "could ever endorse political violence."

The GOP's Trump divide

There's a deep schism in the GOP, with a 56% majority considering themselves "traditional" Republicans and 36% calling themselves Trump Republicans (Axios). The former is often called establishment Republicans. The two groups hold widely different views on removing the president from office, contesting the election and the future of the party. But the Trump Republicans behave with far more unity and intensity. Just 1% of Trump Republicans — versus about one-in-four traditional Republicans — think Trump should be removed from office. Traditional Republicans are split over whether the party is better because of Trump; 96% of Trump Republicans say it is. ❖

Potential impeachment fallout in Indiana

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – The second impeachment of President Trump, this time with votes of Republicans, including Liz Cheney, No. 3 in House GOP leadership, and Michigan’s Fred Upton and eight others, came after too many other Republicans played a game with QAnon that turned deadly.



Vice President Mike Pence wouldn’t play. He wouldn’t try illegally to block election certification, even with Trump still railing about vote conspiracy claims of QAnon wackos and other internet rumors that 60 courts had rejected.

QAnon, with its mysterious “Q” founder, spreads wild stories about the country being controlled by Satanic child-trafficking pedophiles, often cannibalistic, in a war against Trump.

So, when Pence wouldn’t help stage a coup to keep Trump president, there were chants of “Hang Mike Pence!” in the mob storming the Capitol and suggestions that Pence had revealed himself as a child-trafficking pedophile. That was cited in emails I received.

Gosh, I never thought of Mike as cannibalizing children.

Sen. Todd Young was one who stood tall, while too many others, those in the QAnon Caucus, were short in stature as the Constitution was tested and the Capitol was stormed.

The Republican from Indiana neither caved at taunts of fury-fueled pro-Trump protesters nor cowered at the possibility of facing a primary election challenge in 2022.

Young voted for certification of election results, disdaining political games of others seeking to humor Trump and curry favor with his devoted base by pretending that disproved vote-conspiracy rumors needed more study.

Young, a former U.S. Marine officer, took his oath to the nation seriously back then and still does today as a U.S. senator. He told angry pro-Trump protesters on Capitol Hill that he had supported Trump but that “the law matters.”

“Under God, I took an oath,” he said. “Do we still

take that seriously in this country?”

Well, no, not by those taking a political oath to Donald J. Trump, not to some other god. Nor do they take seriously stuff written by outdated Founders on some old piece of paper before the tweets of reality.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell pleaded with Republican senators to accept certified results of the votes by the states and not play dangerous political games. Some with presidential ambitions played on, even though they knew Biden won and that there wasn’t sufficient support in Senate or House to overturn the election.

Nebraska Republican Sen. Ben Sasse said they all knew the truth. In their private talks, he said, “I haven’t heard a single congressional Republican allege that the election results were fraudulent – not one.”

Trump seized on the Electoral College challenge to draw thousands of supporters Washington and incite them to march on the Capitol and “fight like hell.” They did.

So, what’s the political fallout in Indiana?

Pence could safely be back home again in Indiana, but he wants to run for president. Now, he will have to run without support from the Trump base _ at least that part that wanted to hang him. Young could face a Trumpster challenger in the primary. He should prevail. But remember Dick Lugar.

Sen. Mike Braun has political repair work. Flip-

flopping angered both sides. He was early among Republicans to acknowledge Biden’s win. Then he joined the QAnon Caucus to challenge results. Finally, after the deadly Capitol rioting, he abandoned the challenge.

Sticking with the challenge even after it brought the storming of the Capitol were four Republican House members from Indiana, Reps. Jackie Walorski, Jim Banks, Jim Baird and Greg Pence, brother of the guy they wanted to hang.

All are in solidly Republican districts. So, a

primary challenge could have posed greater danger than the general election. They would seem to be safe now from a pro-Trump primary challenger, a factor no doubt in their calculations. Anger toward them, if only among Democratic voters in their districts, will pose no danger. Danger would come only if significant numbers of Hoosier Republicans turn against Trump and them. ❖



Colwell is a South Bend Tribune columnist.

Pence, Young shine in Donald Trump's swamp

By **CRAIG DUNN**

KOKOMO – And now we know the truth. It was never about draining the swamp. It was never about building a wall. It was never about restoring power to the governed. It was, is and forever will be about doing what most benefitted Donald J. Trump.



First, let me start by acknowledging that there were some very good things that happened over the years prior to the pandemic. Our economy skyrocketed. Bureaucratic red tape was cut and enabled all Americans to prosper. Unemployment rates dropped to historical lows in every measurable subgroup.

The judiciary was nudged to a less activist and more conservative status by a wealth of newly appointed judges at all levels, including three outstanding appointments to the United States Supreme Court. Peace broke out in the Middle East when several nations struck long-awaited treaties with Israel. Our military was beefed up to deal with threats from current adversaries and potential adversaries in the future. China's threat to world peace and our economy was recognized and the process of reining in its abuses was well underway. All in all, the achievements of President Trump's term in office were pretty impressive.

But, then there were the other things that hall-marked the Trump Administration. The vainglorious, megalomaniacal rantings via Twitter, the revolving door staff changes that discarded a host of talented public servants like empty beer cans, the associations maintained with questionable friends, the vilification of anyone, friend or foe, who dared to disagree with The Donald. Worst of all, the incessant and unabated failure to tell the truth in the smallest to the most important matters. In certain ways, he conducted himself as a blended incarnation of Benito Mussolini and Joseph Goebbels. I don't want to dance around this one. Donald Trump was a big fat liar!

As soon as the election was concluded, you could see that the Trump experience was not going to have a happy ending. The man, who was given everything as a child and probably never told "no" or disciplined as he grew up, simply was not going to let something as quaint as democracy and the sanctity of our presidential election stand in the way of his continued occupancy of the White House. Donald Trump was going to go kicking and screaming from the Oval Office and if he needed to trash our sacred institutions and traditions to further his

ambitions, then so be it. It was Donald Trump who was responsible for the disastrous and dangerous week we all experienced last week. Let there never be any confusion over who was responsible for the riot and mayhem that struck our Capitol.

Two Hoosiers rose above the crowd last week with their mature, steady conduct and fidelity to our United States Constitution. Vice President Mike Pence and Sen. Todd Young will enter the history books as two men who actually believe in oaths, the Constitution and in acting in the best interests of their country and not their careers.

The selection of Mike Pence as Donald Trump's running mate in 2016 was potentially an uneasy marriage from the start. No two men could be more different from each other. Pence was not a man of wealth and privilege. The vice president was deeply religious and dogmatically conservative. Mike Pence was also a very humble and nice person. While we occasionally had our differences regarding some social issues, I always maintained the highest level of respect for his integrity and personal conduct. He was an amazing counter-argument for those who cynically believe that nice guys can't go anywhere in politics. Mike Pence often stated that "when you find a turtle on top of a fence post, you know he didn't get there by himself." Pence believed in friend-raising as much as he ever did in fundraising. He made friends honestly and naturally and cultivated those relationships over time.

Mike Pence was probably not Donald Trump's first choice for vice president, but given the horrendous stories leaking out concerning Trump's abhorrent personal conduct and wanton animalistic treatment of women, he needed a reliably "Christian" running mate to cement his bona fides with a significant portion of the Republican voting base. Someday when Pence writes his autobiography, I will thumb forward in the book to learn about the behind the scenes discussions between Mike and Karen that preceded his agreement to give up the job of Indiana governor and take the unenviable job of counterbalancing Donald Trump.

I expected from the beginning that there would come a day when Donald Trump and Mike Pence would divorce. Frankly, I expected it long before last week. The only glue holding the relationship together was the fact that Mike Pence is a loyal man. He learned that his loyalty was unrequited when he had the temerity to place the United States Constitution ahead of blind loyalty to a raving madman.

Some would say that Mike Pence was only doing his job when he failed to obey Trump's commands to void the lawful presidential election and become complicit in a de facto coup d'état. I contend that Pence demonstrated great courage in following his constitutional obligations. He knew that refusal to bend to Trump's will would likely put an end to his future presidential ambitions. Polls have indicated that 30% of Trump's voters believed that fraud decided the election. These would be voters he would need in future primaries.

He also knew that Donald Trump was a vile and

vicious man who trashed honorable men and American heroes with equal disregard. Once Pence failed to do the president's bidding, he would be forever marked as a "loser" in Trump's book and subject to future unrelenting ridicule. Pence could have sent the Electoral College votes back to the states in question and let them recertify or do their worst, the equivalent of a political punt. He refused to take the easy path. He bravely acted as a man who loves and respects his country and its Constitution and did his job. He did this amidst screams in the halls of Congress and on social media to hang him. This makes him a hero in my book.

My other Hoosier hero last week was Sen. Todd Young. It would have been so easy to have joined multiple other senators in challenging the votes in certain swing states. With a 2022 reelection campaign staring him in the face, the path of least resistance would have led him to siding with Sens. Mike Braun, Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley, Marsha Blackburn and other firebrands who were focusing more on their futures than on the future of our country. Young not only refused to join in the challenge to the election, but he became a forceful voice for obeying oaths and following the Constitution.

One of my lasting impressions of last week's political circus and riot will be Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley, a future presidential candidate, playing to the Trump faithful and future rioters by giving a fistful power salute. Contrast Hawley's entrance to the Senate chambers with Indiana Sen. Todd Young, a Marine veteran, fearlessly wading into the angry mob and pleading his case. "I value your opinion. I actually share your concerns," Young said. "But the law matters. I took an oath under God. Under God, I took an oath. Do we still take that seriously in this country?" Later, Young affirmed that he would "uphold my constitutional duty" and vote to certify the Electoral College results.

The crowd that Sen. Young confronted was the same group who crashed in the doors to the Capitol building, who screamed to hang Mike Pence and who murdered the Capitol police officer. Young demonstrated personal and professional courage far and above the call of duty. While many of his fellow senators quaked in their boots and figuratively hid under their desks, Young took his views into the teeth of an angry mob. That is heroism and that is true leadership.

As we look back over the disaster of last week, we can be very proud of the two Hoosiers who did not flinch in the face of adversity and danger, two loyal and honest public servants who put country before themselves. Despite what you might think about their politics, they should be honored for standing tall in the moment of danger. ❖

Dunn is the former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.

We had plenty of canaries warning us

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPORT – Of all the reflections and reactions from Wednesday's attack on Congress, the most transcendent harkens back to Sept. 11, 2001. I can't help but think of Todd Beamer and all those passengers aboard a hijacked jetliner. They knew they were about to die, but they fought their way into the cockpit, diverting the path of a weaponized aircraft said to have been directed to Washington to destroy targets that could have included the Capitol. Those Americans died as patriots to protect our Capitol.



What happened Wednesday is unnerving for many reasons, not the least of which is the sacrifice common Americans made for the

sanctity of what we represent. Think for a moment what the typical American reaction would be to Wednesday's news if the people accountable had been North Korean nationals, Iranian spies or Cuban dissidents.

They weren't. They were Americans. They didn't sneak in across the unguarded Mexican border. They weren't out to avenge George Floyd's death. They were there because their president encouraged them to be. And there lies the difficult dissection of the presidency and the officeholder. As Americans, we're simply torn between the stark reality that a sitting president has solicited election fraud in Georgia and urged violence on our Capitol and the somber reality that this person is our highest elected official.

Should he be censured? Should he resign? Should the 25th Amendment be invoked? Should he be impeached again? Should we just hope that he goes away without further incident? Those are the issues in the frame of a national deliberation it's almost hard to believe we're having. But we are.

That said, future generations will judge the actions of our officials now. Like it or not, the bar has been lowered for our standardbearer at the highest level, and that can only lower the bar at every level beneath it.

For those of us who lived through Watergate, the same sickening feeling is upon us. A president simply has to leave. There are those who said that Nixon would never resign, and he himself declared he was not a quitter. But he did resign. There are those who say Trump will never resign, and I doubt he will. So, too, I doubt that Mike Pence will invoke the 25th Amendment, or that the remaining cabinet members will responsibly vote to remove him.

It's up to Congress to act to impeach a sitting

president for the first time. Yes, he'll probably be playing golf in Florida by the time there is a vote in the Senate, but a vote could guarantee that he is not elected president again. Moreover, it can send a message to future candidates who play up to the Trump legacy that impeachment and a permanent ban are what improper, illegal and unethical conduct gets you in the Oval Office, no matter which party you represent or what your aims are.

Often I think of the Lincoln quote that each generation represents the last, best hope of our republic. That has never been more so than now. We are a country as divided as any time since the Civil War, so much so that there will be no transition with an outgoing and incoming president on the same podium on Inauguration Day.

Our best hope is that the situation we're facing brings out the best in us – to educate more voters, to register more people who can vote and to embrace and

discuss the issues as the agenda for our future. As a Democrat, I have to say I'm proud of many Republicans who have stood up – on principle – to what has happened. I'm equally as disappointed in others who have no principle, other than pandering to the people who lined their pockets.

We can do better. We have to do better. Many of us have heard pundits refer to Benjamin Franklin's line when he was asked what kind of country the founding fathers created: "A republic, if you can keep it."

Vladimir Putin is laughing all the way from Moscow to the Black Sea. Kim Jong Un can watch with security the American example. The Chinese are realizing that the pandemic isn't our worst problem. We have seen our enemy, and it is us. ❖

Kitchell is the former mayor of Logansport.

Biden faces polarization

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – If the months since the November elections have shown us anything, it's that the U.S. is more deeply divided than we've experienced in a very long time. This has been building at least since the 1990s, starting in Congress and ultimately coming to be reflected in a polarized electorate, but it's reached the point where, rather than take pleasure in the success of a politician elected to the presidency, you have to keep your fingers crossed on his behalf.



For starters, we now have a Congress, and electorate, divided along multiple fault lines. There are, of course, the partisan differences on the complex challenges that beset this country on climate change, economic growth, the pandemic, policing and racial justice, our policies toward China and

Russia. Political groups with opinions on these and other issues are more sophisticated, more active, more insistent, and more aggressive in trying to shape the public dialogue than ever before. Each side tends to be suspicious of the other, viewing their adversaries not just as wrong, but as attacking our national security interests.

Now in the mix, though, we also have the divisions stoked by President Trump, whose desperation to hold onto power has led him and his followers to traffic in conspiracy theories lacking any evidence and to reject the norms, principles, and institutions we've relied on for centuries to build this nation. There now seem to be two Republican parties in Congress and in the country at large: One that is interested in enabling and appealing to people who reject constitutional democracy, and one that is will-

ing to stand up for it.

These are not entirely new issues, but they've become sharply more painful. The stark, no-prisoners divisions in our country make the life of our elected leaders — the people we choose to move our country forward — overwhelmingly challenging. In short, the greater the polarization, the tougher it is to build consensus and solve our problems, even though if you talk to ordinary Americans, they tend to prefer cooperation and bipartisan solutions — though even that has been fraying.

Every indication is that President-elect Biden identifies himself as a moderate and plans to govern from the center or a bit to its left. His cabinet choices so far have been from the deep pool of centrist Democrats, people with expertise and experience. He believes that he can advance his goals through bipartisanship and cooperation, and he's certainly spent a lifetime in the game and has friends on both sides of the aisle. His political instincts are strong. Democrats' tenuous hold on both the House and the Senate may help him on this front, giving strength to moderates in both parties who are willing to sit down together in the interests of governing the country effectively.

To be sure, there are plenty of forces working against bipartisanship. Many Democrats will be eager to reverse the policies of the last four years and will argue for jamming through whatever they can accomplish. Many Republicans will see political advantage in either peddling the fake narrative that Biden's win was illegitimate or reprising the rejectionist stance taken by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell when Barack Obama became president.

But with Congress's divisions mirroring the country's, maybe there's also room for hope. If a core of legislators of both parties are willing to work with the Biden administration, find common ground, and pass legislation that makes the country better, then perhaps Washington can actually set an example that helps a reeling nation heal. ❖

Holcomb begins second term with pandemic, 'laser-focused'

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS — Less than 24 hours after the Capitol Hill insurrection, Gov. Eric Holcomb continued with his delayed year-end media interviews. On this day, he fielded questions via Zoom from Howey Politics Indiana, Indiana Legislative Insight's Ed Feigenbaum, and the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette's Nikki Kelly.



It came just four days prior to Holcomb's second inaugural. He was sworn in with an intimate ceremony at the Indiana

State Museum, where he drew a historic comparison with his favorite president, Abraham Lincoln.

"At this moment, our moment, even knowing full well the awful toll of COVID-19 and acknowledging that we are still in its deadly grip, it's important to look to the future – a future for our state and our citizens that I believe is full of opportunity and promise," Holcomb said. "We will remain laser-focused on managing our way through this pandemic and rolling out vaccines with all the energy and resources of our administration, and I will further update you on what we're doing in my State of the State Address next week. But I am reminded that, in midst of the Civil War, the United States was also constructing the first transcontinental railroad. Even as the country was tearing itself apart, we were binding ourselves together in ways that would prove far more meaningful and durable."

He then focused on the civil and racial strife of the 1960s. "Even as our society was in turmoil over Vietnam, the assassinations of John and Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King and protests and riots in the street, Americans developed the first tools of the Information Age, made breakthroughs in treating heart disease, explored the moon, and expanded rights for women and people of color," Holcomb continued. "Theologian and author J. Sidlow Baxter once said that the difference between an obstacle and an opportunity is our attitude toward it. He said, 'Every opportunity has a difficulty, and every difficulty has an opportunity.' So the pandemic has pulled forward many trends that were already underway."

Holcomb noted the state's resilience. "One year

ago, our unemployment rate stood at 3.1% – among the lowest in the country," he said. "In April, as the pandemic bared its teeth, unemployment ballooned to 17.5%. Today, it has fallen to 5%. We are not where we need to be. But we are steadily clawing our way back."

With the COVID-19 pandemic, Holcomb said, Hoosiers are now experimenting with new ways to conduct business, education and telemedicine. "Fellow Hoosiers, this future that is arriving faster than we anticipated plays to Indiana's strengths," Holcomb said. "The business climate we have nurtured, the seeds we have sown are not just for today, but also for tomorrow. For Indiana, the future is now, and this is the Indiana Advantage."

"When I stood here for the first time, four years ago, I described how we are the descendants of pioneers – people who didn't just settle this territory but who were trailblazers, inventors, innovators, visionaries; always with an eye on finding new and better ways to do things – always with an eye to the future," Holcomb said. "My fellow Hoosiers, I will not minimize the challenges we still face emerging from this pandemic: Sustaining our recovery, continuing to strengthen our state and extending opportunity to all Hoosiers. That is the work before us."

For some 35 minutes, Holcomb sat for this following Zoom interview:

Feigenbaum:

Given your ability to work with governors from both parties from neighboring states, would you be interested in chairing the National Governors Association to help pave the bipartisan way on issues?

Holcomb: Yes,

I'm interested in cheering best practices and lessons learned or whether we did it right or wrong. Those are helpful conversations, whether it's the NGA and



RGA calls; I do calls weekly with the governors of Kentucky and Ohio, just us three. And then we do Midwestern calls and they're all helpful. You get a sense of where people are, where they're going and what they're going through. It's affecting us all the same. There's a quote from Lincoln – maybe it's more applicable to yesterday – when he said, "I was told I was on the road to hell. I didn't know it was just a mile down the road and had a dome on it." I did an interview with someone from out of state and he said, "It looks like you governors have been to hell and back," and I said, "We're back? That's good news." We commiserate and we kind of share what we and the people we represent are going through. So yeah, I'd be happy to represent, to share lessons and learn."

Feigenbaum: But would you be interested in chairing, not cheering, the NGA?

Holcomb: I don't need more on my plate and I'm not being recruited.

Kelly: I'm sure you watched some of the video (from the U.S. Capitol siege) last night. How much blame to you place on President Trump for what happened yesterday?

Holcomb: I watched more TV last night than I have all last year. I was thinking Billy Joel had more verses to add to "We Didn't Start the Fire," ... just watching the videos and seeing what was unfolding in real time. I just don't like to get involved in the blame game for that reason. If you listen to Billy Joel's song or the nation's history there are different moments where society seems to unravel, flare up or cross the line and it happened yesterday for multiple reasons. Every single elected official who had or has any role in it is responsible for their actions. That's what I tried to articulate yesterday, which is now more than ever, we need the right way to be on full display. What I'm trying to say is to pull out one comment or one action or one tweet or one person I think misses what's going on in totality. Time marches on. How we march with it is how rightly we will be judged. It was sad to see this, our nation's shining city on the hill succumb to the violent whims of a mob. Yesterday's actions were a stain on our history. I hope it doesn't lead us to resort to the blame game, but rather to a more positive way. Two wrongs never make a right. For whatever perceived injustice or wrong that folks in what became a mob – we used to study the storming of the Bastille; this was a storming of the Capitol, if you have a grievance, there's a process to air and settle that grievance, whether you like the outcome or not. Never is violence an acceptable part of that process. Going forward, and I'll do my part in it, I hope some good can come out of what I think others saw as a wakeup call yesterday.

Howey: Governor, there seems to be a perception problem among many Trump supporters. They believe the election was stolen. Yet, Secretary Lawson and many other sources (at the state and federal levels) say this was an extremely free and fair election. Talk to Trump supporters in Indiana and tell them whether you believe this was a free and fair election, nationally.

Holcomb: I know the most about ours in Indiana, and it was. I'm not saying that because of the outcome. It was. I'm not trying to be holier than thou or say that we got it all perfect, but we had citizen input and participation and observers. It was a free and fair and safe and secure election, internally and externally. If it wasn't, we would be talking about how we were going to make sure that never happened again. If there were questions about other states – and there were – then that's the process I'm talking about. You three know me. I try to stay focused on my job, I try to stay disciplined. We are going through a global pandemic right now and I wish that was our central national focus, to get through that safely and swiftly. That's

obviously not the case, because of what we saw yesterday. For those who think that in other states, be it Georgia or Arizona or Pennsylvania or others, there's a process. Where is the focus going forward? I don't fault folks for asking questions or taking part in the process that is laid out before us. It's when it veers off into violence or denial or not accepting factual outcomes. The process played out in these states. You may disagree with the legislature, or the governor, election commission or the state and federal courts and their decisions all along the way, but in those three areas, the process played out. If you had concerns yesterday and wanted 10 more days to investigate, I'll be interested to see if you're interested in fixing that problem from occurring again in the future. Or was it more about attention?

Feigenbaum: We've got a change coming in the office of attorney general. Will your office play a role in



deciding when the State of Indiana should be a party to or take the lead on any kind of amicus briefs, as we saw with Attorney General Curtis Hill, without any input from your administration?

Holcomb: First, you have to respect the fact that it is a separately elected office and understand they work with our agencies, absolutely. But to the point of your question, our offices interacted over the last four years and they will continue over the next four. I hope going forward that occurs more often than not. It's not just that we're in a position where we're 100% right and here's what you need to do, it's part of having the conversations about how we feel, and then two separately elected officials have to make up their own minds, ultimately. So I look forward to collaboration and, hopefully, agreement.

Feigenbaum: There's a difference between a brief going on from the attorney general as opposed to a brief going on with the State of Indiana as a party. Do

you expect to get involved in making more decisions as a state, rather than the individual officeholder?

Holcomb: Where we can, if the situation warrants that. I'm not looking to get involved just to get involved. I'm looking for a profile, I'm not looking for another stage or another audience. The attorney general's office and our office, as elected officials will continue to work on other areas of agreement.

Kelly: I want to focus on your agenda. One of the things not in there is the need for substantive movement on the teacher pay issue. You've promised teachers for two years you would address that this year. Circumstances change ...

Holcomb: You've not seen my budget proposal yet.

Kelly: Not yet. Tell me how you will try to help teachers during a pandemic?

Holcomb: There are a number of areas of agreement already with our office and the legislature, making sure for the rest of this year that we fund 100% K-12 education. I hope that thing is fast-tracked. I think you used the word "promised"; I stand by what I've said in the past and still feel the same way. The teacher compensation report laid out the facts and so the discussion we're having right now with the legislature is how you ensure that more dollars get into teacher paychecks. There's different ways to go about that. Do you just put more dollars into the top of the funnel and just hope that they get there? Do you hope more dollars get into paychecks like we did when we passed a record increase over the last four years for K-12. We're living in the time of a global pandemic. Let's rewind the tape. I will confess before you three I was wrong when I said we need to prepare for the worst. Fortunately, the worst didn't occur. I was looking at February, March and April and that we needed to be prepared for a 2008-09 recession and hit to our bottom line. We were thinking it could be a \$1 billion, \$2 billion or \$3 billion hit. It ended up being about \$950 million. What we've seen is our revenues start to come back, obviously not in all sectors. But we have seen our revenues start to come back so that's why I've said ... you haven't seen my budget yet. I believe when you see my budget that Indiana will stand out and we'll be able to pay down debt, restore agency level funding, fund some capital improvements, invest in some infrastructure projects and centrally to all four of those priorities, increase funding for K-12; only because our revenues allow it. The breadth and depth (of what the commission put forth) was fantastic. Do I agree with all them? No. Have I met someone who has? Not yet. But different people agree with different parts of it.

Howey: The Trump era has presented a lot of

challenges for journalists as well as Republicans. For example, at the 2020 convention, there was no party platform which prompted some of my colleagues to describe this not as a party, but as a cult of personality. Are you concerned about where President Trump has taken the Republican Party and in a post-Trump era, where would you like to see the Republican Party go?

Holcomb: I would like to see our party be judged on our actions, results and courage more so than our rhetoric, and as a party which is willing and wanting to

serve everyone, whether they agree with us as a party. Because what I've found over the last four years, when you're willing to work with anyone of any stripe, you're going to get a lot more done. And we've been able to get a lot of big things done, in large part, because of that willingness to collaborate and this is just one example ... look at Congressman Pete Visclosky. At the tail-end of his long and storied career, to work with him and his office on the West Lake expansion and double tracking the South Shore – this is something we should have done years ago and we finally got around to doing it. It's

in large part because of him and we didn't let party labels enter into the conversation at all. In fact, we became friends through it all because of the work we did together. You can point to other examples, the East Chicago lead crisis. We had to pull together what observers said was a strange bedfellows group. I hope our party stands for our principles for sure, but the rhetoric has got to line up with the results. If you're a fiscal conservative, we in Indiana have dealt with our debt. I want to pay down more debt if we can. Since I was first sworn in our national debt has gone up \$10 trillion. Maybe we ought to deal with that, or our entitlement programs. Maybe states' rights do matter. I hope our party, as it does here, lines up with what we say.

Feigenbaum: Are we going to see any online gaming options from the Hoosier Lottery this year?

Holcomb: To be determined. Stand by. Open minded about it. Need to know more.

Kelly: Looking back on 2020, is there was a single thing you would do differently?

Holcomb: Hmmmm. I would have worn a mask in Brown County one day when I picked up my food. I haven't made that mistake twice. I constantly think on one hand how I could do a better job trying to be persuasive about the kind of things we know will help the collective good during a time when it seems to be en vogue to protest what someone else says that is counter to what you feel. We have fire codes, but somehow COVID codes are unacceptable. We encourage wearing masks when



you're close to someone and there are folks who remain in denial that this is an airborne-transmitted virus. What I try to think about is how can I appeal to them so they understand what we're trying to do is get to the point where we don't have to wear a mask. For one reason or another, I feel I've come up short.

Howey: You may have covered this at your weekly presser yesterday when I was consumed with what was happening on Capitol Hill, but when do you expect widespread vaccinations? And it seems the Trump administration has put the onus on the states to educate and do the logistics. Should the federal government be more involved in that aspect?

Holcomb: There are many factors that have to do with that timeline. We're talking about weeks. Starting this Friday at 9 a.m., if you're 80 years or older, you can call 211 to schedule your appointment; potentially

250,000 Hoosiers fall into that category. And then you step down – that could be seven to 14 days – and we fall to the 70-year-olds. If there's a long line of 250,000 people, that's going to push back that 70- and then 60-year-olds. It has to do with inventory. We're trying to deal with those with highest risks and hospitalizations. When we get down to 60-year-olds, then we're talking about 1.5 million. We've got about 350,000 doses, with about 300,000 scheduled, so this thing is moving. If Johnson & Johnson gets emergency authorization in February, that's going to be quicker, and we'll get down to that next level.

Howey: So March or April?

Holcomb: It's a matter of weeks, not months. I do believe that March Madness will be a happier time than it was last year. ❖

Holcomb proposes modest K-12 fund boost

Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — The [state budget proposal](#) Gov. Eric Holcomb submitted to Hoosier lawmakers Wednesday maintains Indiana's strong financial condition, notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic, while providing a modest education spending increase and paying down state obligations (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Altogether, the Republican chief executive is recommending Indiana spend \$17.5 billion during the 2022 budget year, which begins July 1, 2021,

and \$17.8 billion during the 2023 budget year that starts on July 1, 2022. The state is projected to collect \$35.5 billion in tax revenue during the two-year period, meaning Indiana will spend less money than it takes in as required by the 2018 balanced budget amendment to the Indiana Constitution. As usual, funding for elementary and high school education and teacher pensions will consume 50% of General Fund expenditures, and is among the few spending categories in line for a funding bump over the next two years. Specifically, Holcomb is proposing K-12 education spending grow in the 2022 budget year by approximately \$150 million, or 2%, to \$7.65 billion, and increase by an additional \$75 million, or 1%, in 2023. While that's less than the 2.5% annual increases for K-12 education in the current state budget,

Cris Johnston, director of Indiana's Office of Management and Budget (pictured below) said Hoosier schools also are in line to receive some \$800 million in coronavirus assistance from the federal government — four times the COVID-19 relief schools received last spring. "I think the schools will have the flexibility to address the needs that they have," Johnston said. The governor's budget does not directly allocate any money for teacher pay raises — once again leaving it up to local school district leaders to decide whether that's how they want to spend the additional per student tuition support they receive from the state. At the same time, the budget proposes pre-paying an extra \$400 million into a teacher pension account, freeing up an estimated \$69 million a year in future budgets that could be used for any state purpose.

Melton asks where is teacher pay hike?

Senate Assistant Democratic Leader Eddie Melton (D-Gary), ranking minority member of the State Budget Committee, released the following statement in response to the governor's proposed budget. "One item that was glaringly absent from the governor's budget was funding

for teacher pay raises," Sen. Melton said. "Hoosier educators were promised long overdue pay increases this budget cycle, and there was nothing in the governor's budget that indicated his desire to follow through on his own promise. This pandemic showed the lengths our teachers go through to creatively educate our kids and their work this past year has shown that they are even more deserving of immediate pay raises. "The Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission spent two years researching teacher pay



in our state and developing recommendations on ways to make salaries more competitive for our Hoosier educators. So, I'm deeply disappointed to see the governor's lack of commitment when it comes to supporting the recommendations put forth by his own commission. Simply passing the responsibility off to the legislature is not enough, and it doesn't make sense when the Republican super majority has shown us that we can't rely on them to take action on this issue. We already know, from years of pushback from Republicans on teacher pay, that this is simply not a priority for them.

COVID liability advances in Senate

State lawmakers have advanced a bill that would protect individuals and businesses from COVID-19-related lawsuits. The Senate Judiciary Committee on Wednesday afternoon passed Senate Bill 1 to the Senate floor for consideration (Erdody, [IBJ](#)). The bill, authored by Republicans Mark Messmer of Jasper, Eric Koch of Bedford and Liz Brown of Fort Wayne, would shield businesses and individuals from coronavirus civil liability lawsuits unless there was gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct that could be proven with "clear and convincing evidence." The bill would specifically protect individuals, associations, institutions, corporations, companies, trusts, limited liability companies, partnerships, political subdivisions, government entities and "any other organization or entity." It would not affect worker's compensation claims. The legislation would be retroactive to March 1 and in effect through Dec. 31, 2024. Initially, the bill did not include language to shield businesses that produced pandemic-related materials, such as personal protective equipment, but committee members amended the legislation and added that element before passing it on Wednesday. During a hearing earlier this month on the bill, nearly all of the individuals who testified were in favor of it. Some of the supporters who testified included the Indiana Apartment Association, Indiana Builders Association, Eli Lilly and Co., Purdue University, Indy Chamber, Indiana Manufacturers Association, Indiana Restaurant and Lodging Association, Indiana School Boards Association, Indiana chapter of the National Federation of Independent Businesses and the Indiana Hospital Association.

Vaccine bill sparks heated debate

A bill that would prohibit Indiana employers from requiring workers to get immunizations against COVID-19 or any other disease generated heated discussion Wednesday morning, reviving a debate over where to draw the line between public health and personal freedom (Russell, [IBJ](#)). The Indiana Senate Pensions and Labor Committee heard more than 90 minutes of testimony but did not take a vote in order to allow more people to submit written testimony. The measure, Senate Bill 74, would allow workers to decline any immunizations for medical, religious or personal reasons. The measure, introduced

by Sen. Dennis Kruse, R-Auburn, would allow workers to sue an employer that require immunizations as a condition of employment. Leah Wilson, executive director of Stand for Health Freedom, a not-for-profit dedicated to protecting parental rights, said any vaccination mandate would be "immoral and unethical." "I'm asking you to stand up and protect our civil rights," she said.

Rokita declines to sign AG letter

Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita announced Wednesday that he declined to join a group of 50 attorneys general from states and territories who signed a letter condemning last week's pro-Trump riots at the U.S. Capitol ([IndyStar](#)). Rokita instead wrote two letters — one published on his Twitter account, and another provided to [IndyStar](#) — that denounced the events that transpired last week. The letters also attacked Antifa and protests over police brutality that occurred in 2020. The two letters came after the National Association of Attorneys General published a letter directed at acting U.S. Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen that said they were "appalled" by what happened at the U.S. Capitol last week, when rioters stormed the building resulting in the death of five people, including a Capitol Police officer. That letter was signed by attorneys general from every state except Indiana, Montana, Louisiana and Texas. "We all just witnessed a very dark day in America," stated the letter. "The events of January 6 represent a direct, physical challenge to the rule of law and our democratic republic itself." By Wednesday, Rokita, Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen and Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry had signed and sent their own letter to Rosen. The letter starts off focusing on the U.S. Capitol riots but pivots to reprimand the "culture war" and unrest over police brutality that shook the U.S. and the world last year.

Holcomb to send National Guard to DC

Gov. Eric Holcomb is sending hundreds of members of the Indiana National Guard to Washington, D.C., to assist with security during the presidential inauguration next week. On Wednesday during his weekly press briefing, Holcomb said he is deploying 625 troops to Washington, from Saturday through Jan. 22 ([IBJ](#)). President-elect Joe Biden will be sworn into office on Jan. 20, and the law enforcement officials have warned that protests are anticipated. Last week, protests turned violent at the U.S. Capitol. The FBI has also warned that protests that could start as early as this weekend are planned for all 50 state capitols, but Holcomb and Indiana State Police Superintendent Doug Carter on Wednesday said they do not have any direct information about protests planned in Indianapolis. Carter said state police are prepared for any protests that could take place over the next week. "It will be all hands on deck," Carter said. "I can assure you." ❖

2017 solar law ended up stimulating sector

By ANNE LAKER

INDIANAPOLIS – Energy independence. It’s a phrase that might conjure images of a Madison County school corporation with a sparkling new solar array, or a field of bobbing oil derricks down in Posey County. However you envision it, energy independence is a notion that ought to appeal to Hoosiers in general and Republicans in particular.



Energy dependence, on the other hand, is the effect of SEA 309, the 2017 state law that phases out net metering of consumer-generated solar energy. This cynical law hampers one industry while passively aggressively buttressing another.

Essentially ghostwritten by utility lobbyists, the law was shepherded by Sen. Brandt Hershman, who, soon after the law was passed, his industry credentials burnished, flew the coop to Washington to be a lobbyist himself.

The upshot: Install solar at your home or business after July 2022, and the utilities pay you less than half retail market rate for the energy you generate. You may even have to pay them. Southern Indiana utility giant Vectren has filed a request with the IURC to halt net metering even earlier, as soon as March 2021.

These threatening deadlines (and a federal tax credit that was set to expire until the latest COVID relief package extended it) have ironically stimulated Indiana’s solar economy in the short term.

Solar providers can barely keep up with the surge in demand. Outfits like Solar United Neighbors of Indiana are marketing solar buyers clubs. And a new initiative called Carbon Neutral Indiana is enticing Hoosiers to analyze and offset their carbon footprints with investments in forest preservation and solar [Disclosure: the author is a member of both].

Although it was designed to keep the solar genie in the bottle, SEA 309 has forced the genie out.

Not everyone is okay with this finger on the scale. Almost as soon as Gov. Holcomb signed 309 into law, efforts to undo it began. And they will continue in the current session. Senator Ron Alting (R-Lafayette) voted against the bill in 2017. He’s carrying the baton to reverse it in the 2021 session with SB 249.

“More and more Hoosier homeowners, farmers, schools, local governments and businesses have been in-

stalling solar panels as a way to embrace clean energy and to reduce their overall energy costs,” he said in a prepared statement. “Senate Bill 249 is a commonsense proposal to extend Indiana’s current net metering system that allows Hoosier solar owners who participate in net metering to be credited for the excess energy they provide to the grid at the same rate as the energy they purchase from the utility company.”

Under current Indiana law, “retail market rate” net metering will begin to phase out next year. Sen. Alting’s SB 249 extends the eligibility period for new solar customers by two years and increases the capacity for utility companies to allow new net metering customers.

State Sen. Shelli Yoder (D-Bloomington) is offering a similar antidote bill. Hers would extend net metering by five years and quintuple the size of the systems that are eligible for net metering.

State Sen. Alting points out that in 2019, there were approximately 3,600 solar jobs among 81 solar companies in Indiana. Solar is one of the fastest-growing job markets in the country, adding 51% more jobs from 2019 to 2020 alone. He adds: “I authored SB 249 because we should support Hoosiers who are seeking ways to reduce their energy costs...and to help encourage the growth of Indiana’s clean energy economy.”

That’s the economy Indiana’s utilities ought to be participating in, with all the free market creativity they can muster.

During the 2017 effort to defeat 309, advocates at the Hoosier Environmental Council asked: “In a state that prizes freedom, why would Indiana lawmakers support a bill that would severely undermine the quest for schools, small businesses, homes and congregations to create their own pollution-free solar energy?”



The short answer: The utility lobby. The IndyStar reported that between 2015 and 2017, investor-owned utilities and the organization that represents them spent at least \$109,000 entertaining Indiana

General Assembly legislators, including Colts games, cigar bars, and steak dinners for members of the Senate and House committees focused on utility legislation.

The price of the industry’s fear-disguised-as-arrogance is crippled economic opportunity. Ultimately, the market will decide. With the cost of renewables continuing to plummet, and Hoosiers’ big appetite for energy independence, even utility industry lobbyists can’t stop the sun from shining. ❖

A consultant and grant writer, Laker is principal of Laker Verbal LLC. She is the former director of communications at the Indiana Forest Alliance and hosts a movie review show, Flick Fix, on WQRT 99.1 FM.

COVID's mixed impacts

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – The COVID-19 pandemic inflicted sustained pain and hardship on too many for too long. The effect on our economy, however, is mixed.

The shock to the economy occurred in March and April of 2020. In the United States, 24.7 million persons lost their jobs. Of these, 16.3 million (66%) were added to the numbers unemployed and 8.4 million left the labor force.



During this recovery, through November 2020, 16.9 million persons have found new jobs or returned to previous positions. The number unemployed declined by 12.2 million and 4.6 million have come back into the labor force. (Don't fret about the rounding problem with the numbers.) This partial recovery leaves us 7.8 million shy of the February employment numbers, distributed

as 4.0 million unemployed and 3.8 million out of the labor force.

The recovery since May 2020 saw consumers spending their dollars, and the dollars made available from the federal government, at retail places other than restaurants and bars. And spend they did.

The Census Bureau now provides monthly retail sales data for states. In September 2020, the nation's retail stores (non-store retailers are excluded) recorded sales 7.9% above the same month in 2019. For Indiana, retail sales were up 8.7% (18th best among the states).

Despite these good retail sales, Indiana's gen-

eral retail sales tax collections have seen a feeble recovery. From April through October 2020, these revenues ran just 0.1% ahead of the same period in 2019. Other Indiana sales tax receipts reveal how consumers adjusted to changing conditions. Alcohol sales tax receipts, April through September, were up 22% from a year earlier. Tobacco sales taxes rose 4%. These contrast with Motor Fuel tax receipts, down by 13% as both gasoline prices and the number of miles driven declined.

To this stew of business data, the Census Bureau now adds a new collection of observations from "small" businesses (500 or fewer employees). The Bureau asked "Overall, how has this business been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic?" Hoosier firms were a bit less negative than those nationally. On a scale from +1 (large positive effect) to -1 (large negative effect), Indiana's small businesses offered a value of -0.43 with the U.S. figure registered at -0.48. Both were on the positive side of a moderate negative rating, if you can figure out what that means.

Financial stress was scored as -0.30 and -0.31 (U.S. and IN) and operational challenges, including supply disruptions and working arrangements for employees, were scored similarly at -0.22 and -0.23, for the U.S. and Indiana, respectively.

How much longer will recovery take? Answers to this experimental census survey, for both the nation and Indiana, were in the range of four to five months. Data always trail events. Opinions and forecasts most frequently don't match up with reality. In our complex world, there are many different realities. ❖

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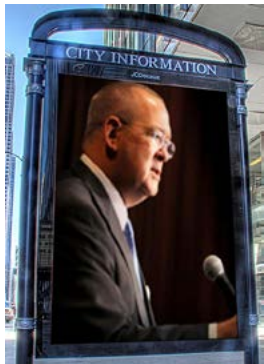
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An attack on America's economy

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – The essential basis of an economy is trust. As the founding father of economics, Adam Smith noted, an economy “. . . can seldom flourish in any state in which there is not a certain degree of confidence in the justice of government.” Our modern world subsists almost wholly on a high degree of trust in the justice and capacity of government, business and households.



Thus, among the many crimes committed by the insurrectionists of Jan. 6, 2021, was a full-fledged attack on the American economy. It was an assault upon the 'confidence in the justice of government' not only by a few tens of thousands of protestors, but among far too many elected officials, including members of

Congress and the president. It is they who must reckon with an event whose lawlessness demands terse retelling.

On Jan. 6, our Congress and vice president met to fulfill a solemn, if mostly symbolic, constitutional duty to certify election results from states. Outside, on the streets of our Capitol, the president caused to assemble a crowd of many tens of thousands. This angry crowd was fueled by dozens of political groups and members of Congress. These people had been carefully groomed for weeks to believe the Big Lie, that the 2020 election was fraudulent or stolen.

Nearly every elected official of the Republican Party participated in this Big Lie. For many, the support amounted to no more than what first seemed a banal statement about electoral fraud. For others, including the president, a dozen senators and two-thirds of the House, it was a full-throated, unambiguous, immoral and deeply anti-American falsehood.

Filled with the deceptiveness of this Big Lie, stoked by the fiery rhetoric of the president, this crowd attacked Congress. They stormed the physical center of American democracy with calls to kill the vice president and members of Congress. They paraded both Nazi and Confederate flags through the halls of Congress, something Hitler's generals could never imagine. They disgustingly tore down Old Glory, replacing it with a Trump banner. They hunted members of Congress, stole classified information and defecated upon the walls of Congress. Meanwhile, others amused themselves by bludgeoning a dying police officer with the American flag. This was not a protest, nor was it an accident. In the words of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it was sedition and insurrection.

The U.S. election of 2020 was not fraudulent or stolen. Every elected Republican leader knew this when they awoke on Jan. 6. They knew it in November, and they know it now. Some Hoosiers, like Vice President Pence, Senator Young and Rep. Bucshon backed away from the Big Lie and its anti-American message before the insurrection started. Against what we now know were threats of terrorism they fulfilled their duty and oath of office. Others scurried away from the Big Lie only after Congress was stormed.

But, amid the stench filled, bloody and battered Halls of Congress, four Hoosiers were among the more than 100 members of Congress voted to sustain the Big Lie. They must now explain how this vote was consistent with their oath to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. I do not believe they can do so convincingly.

As I write, the assault on our republic and our economy continues. Due to this insurrection, nearly a full infantry division has been deployed to defend the Capitol. This is the result of the Big Lie and the inability of the Republican Party to confront the historic lawlessness of President Trump. It is time to do so, and make clear to every American citizen of the historic danger this insurrection brought to our nation.

Now, I don't wish to draw any false equivalence between this insurrection and other dark days in American history. When compared to 9/11, Nixon's resignation or Pearl Harbor, this insurrection is a far graver risk to our Constitution. The Big Lie brought to Washington, D.C., a violent mob, a president and members of Congress willing to sustain a pernicious and vividly obvious lie to thwart a peaceful transfer of power. Not since Gettysburg has our Constitution been more at risk.

It is too early to judge the damage this insurrection has done to our economy. The dark forces that assembled a crowd to attack the Capitol remain among us, damaging "confidence in the justice of government." No one understands the risk to our economy better than American businesses. Rarely, if ever, has the America's private sector responded as quickly and forcefully as they have done so this week.

Those who propagated lies about the election find themselves shedding financial supporters. Eli Lilly, Walmart and General Motors have all suspended support for those who voted against the certification of the 2020 election. More will follow suit, eviscerating future political campaigns. A number of insurrectionist groups, masquerading as conservative organizations will disappear in the weeks to come. America's businesses are keenly aware that our Constitution provides the platform for free commerce.

Likewise, those platforms of insurrection on social media find themselves unwelcomed from the marketplaces that enabled their communications. Those who stoke insurrection find themselves without access to social media accounts. The same Constitution that protects their right to speak does not obligate the rest of us to do

business with them. They deserve the same commercial consideration an Al Qaeda propogandist or Joseph Goeb-bels would receive — none.

I am guardedly hopeful we can contain the economic fallout of this insurrection. It comes at a difficult time, with the nation battered by a global recession and pandemic. The best way to limit damage is to punish traitors and demand that those who spread the Big Lie renounce their dishonesty. We must acknowledge that the Constitution — not race, ethnicity or religion — must be central to our identity as an American. And finally, we

must all acknowledge the results of a just and fair election that brought Joe Biden into office. We must also never forget this terror fueled attack on the United States of America and its aim to damage “confidence in the justice of government.” ❖

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 Trump supporter gets rude awakening

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON – Her face was flushed, and she was dabbing her eyes with a towel. “What happened to you?” CNN correspondent Michael Holmes asked. “I got maced,” she said.



“So what happened?” Holmes asked. “You were trying to go inside the Capitol?” “Yeah,” she said. “I made it like a foot inside, and they pushed me out, and they maced me.”

She could have been your daughter or your neighbor down the street. She looked like an average American visiting her nation’s capital. Her name was Elizabeth, she said, and she was

from Knoxville, Tennessee. Why had she tried to enter the building? For her anyway, the answer seemed obvious.

“We’re storming the Capitol,” she said. “It’s a revolution!” The election had been stolen from her president, and she had traveled hundreds of miles to take it back. She and thousands of others were there at the invitation of President Donald J. Trump.

“All of us here today do not want to see our election victory stolen by emboldened radical Democrats,” the president told Elizabeth and the others. “We will never give up. We will never concede. It will never happen. You don’t concede when there’s death involved. Our country has had enough. We will not take it anymore.”

He issued a call to action. “We’re going to walk down to the Capitol,” he said, “and we’re gonna cheer on our brave senators and congressmen and women. And we’re probably not going to be cheering so much for some of them, because you’ll never take back our country with weakness. You have to show strength and you have to be strong.”

The president, of course, did not walk to the Capitol. He went back to the White House to watch it all unfold on television.

Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and his colleagues set about the task of certifying the election results. “The Constitution gives us here in Congress a limited role,” McConnell said. “We cannot simply declare ourselves a national board of elections on steroids. The voters, the courts and the states have all spoken. They’ve all spoken. If we overrule them, it would damage our republic forever.”

His words might have come a little late. By then, the fuse had been lit, and soon, McConnell and his fellow lawmakers would be evacuated from the chamber. Later, after authorities had restored order, U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney, a longtime critic of the president, stood before his fellow lawmakers to voice his frustration. “We gather today due to a selfish man’s injured pride and the outrage of his supporters whom he has deliberately misinformed for the past two months and stirred to action this very morning,” he said. “What happened here today was an insurrection, incited by the president of the United States.”

Romney spoke against calls from some of his fellow Republicans for an audit of the election results. “Please!” he said. “No congressionally led audit will ever convince those voters, particularly when the president will continue to claim that the election was stolen. The best way we can show respect for the voters who are upset is by telling them the truth.” Many of his colleagues stood and applauded the words of the former Republican presidential candidate.

There were other signs of hope amid the chaos. In his remarks before the riot began, McConnell had said it was time for Americans to come together. “We cannot keep drifting apart into two separate tribes with a separate set of facts and separate realities,” he said, “with nothing in common except our hostility toward each other and mistrust for the few national institutions that we all still share.”

Had he spoken out sooner, could McConnell have reached someone like Elizabeth? Is there a chance he still can? ❖

David Frum, The Atlantic: Many of President Donald Trump's crooked schemes are so ill-thought that even his intimates cannot take them seriously. Asking Russia to hack your opponent's emails during a press conference? Who would do that? He must have been joking! So it was on January 6. What Trump was trying to achieve that day was so flat-out delusional as to defy belief. Trump had gotten it into his head that the vice president could overturn a national vote, kicking the certified tallies back to the states, which could subtract enough legitimate votes on the grounds of fraud to hand the election to Trump. This plan was both illegal and impossible, and Vice President Mike Pence said as much to Trump. But Trump did not quit. His admirers devised a Plan B for him. If Pence would not willingly overturn the 2020 election, then Pence could be strong-armed into doing so. That was the mission for which Trump summoned thousands of his supporters to Washington, D.C., on January 6. As he told the crowd at the Ellipse immediately before the attack on the Capitol: "We're going to have to fight much harder, and Mike Pence is going to have to come through for us." That's why those supporters brandished nooses and shouted death threats against Pence as they surged through the halls of Congress. That's the thought that had the Trump family dancing to "Gloria" before the attack began: Mike Pence compelled by the pressure of the crowd to do the right thing for Trump. ❖



Bill Ketter, CNHI: President Trump is his own woeful enemy. Throughout his presidency he's claimed persecution by the news media, Democrats and anyone unfaithful to his cultish style of leadership. Trump's oppressive mindset was at its worse after he lost the Nov. 3 presidential election. He could not accept being a one-term president, insisting ad nauseam that he won by "hundreds of thousands of votes" in states that voted for him in 2016 but flipped to Democrat Joe Biden in 2020. Sadly, his delusion inflamed his loyalists, including many Republicans in Congress. They believed his unproven claim that a rigged election was supported by facts when it wasn't. They were co-opted in order to show fidelity and endear themselves in the future to his diehard supporters. Local, state and national election officials were not convinced. They steadfastly rejected Trump's assertions, based on made-up tales and conspiracy theories. So did GOP Attorney General William Barr, the nation's top election security official, 90 state and federal judges, several of which were Trump appointees. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to consider the president's grievances. Twice. To wit: No widespread irregularities, no massive vote dumps, no thousands of dead people voting, no voting machine trickery, no violation of state election laws, no thousands of undocumented immigrants casting ballots and on and on. Trump's jihad ended in violence Wednesday at the seat of our democratic republic, the national Capitol. Incited by the president at a rally of his faithful thousands assembled nearby, many

of whom stormed the Capitol, violently bent on forcing Congress to decertify Biden's election as the next president and declare Trump the victor. The world watched in horror as the most admired democracy in history fell victim to a mob aroused by the president's impassioned, stolen election rhetoric. ❖

John Krull, Statehouse File: Years ago, I covered a rally that turned into a riot. It was in the mid-1990s. A motley collection of white supremacist groups from around the Midwest had decided to gather in Indianapolis. After some legal wrangling, they secured a permit to meet on the west side of the Statehouse. They drew crowds not only of their own faithful, but also of counter protesters. Tensions rose as one speaker after another trooped up and tried to make himself — they were all angry white guys — heard through a small, antiquated sound system. The two crowds taunted each other. Then something snapped. The gathered white supremacists moved like a snake. As a group, they attacked some photographers before turning to assault anyone who crossed their paths. They swung signs, bags, belts and fists in all directions. The police restored order in a hurry, but not before many people were left battered and bruised. And shaken. Ground we thought was safe — even sacrosanct — had been turned into a battlefield. A symbol of a free people determined to govern themselves had been soiled with blood and sorrow. I thought of that long-ago day of riot and ruin when I watched the mayhem at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, a day, to echo FDR, that now will live in infamy. I watched a gang of my fellow citizens — my fellow Americans — lay waste to one of our temples of freedom. Somehow, they thought they were patriots when they were desecrating an American shrine. They thought they were the good guys. They thought they were defending freedom. They weren't, of course, but it's easy to understand how they came to be so mistaken. The fuse that led to the Jan. 6 explosion has been a long one. It was lit more than two generations ago when ambitious politicians first discovered that the path to victory at the polls could be paved by inveighing against government. Although Republicans were the most egregious offenders, politicians of both parties argued that government could not do anything right. That government was evil. That government was the enemy. We have met the enemy and the enemy is us. This road took us to the horrors of Jan. 6. If we continue to follow it, it will lead to places that are even worse. In the hours that followed the assault on the Capitol, I found myself thinking of the words of a great American, my late friend U.S. Rep. Andy Jacobs Jr. Andy once told me it pained him to hear political candidates say they would "fight" for an issue, a concern or a constituency. He said he didn't like thinking of people who disagreed with him as adversaries — or even enemies — when they really were his neighbors and fellow citizens. "Why can't we just say, 'we'll work for you or, better yet, we'll work with you?'" Andy asked. ❖

ISP, IMPD to defend Statehouse

INDIANAPOLIS — State and local law enforcement is prepared to respond if any protests or demonstrations at the Indiana Statehouse turn violent and destructive, similar to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol by supporters of outgoing Republican President Donald Trump (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Captain Ron Galaviz of the Indiana State Police said Wednesday his agency is not aware of any planned activities on the Statehouse grounds in the days leading up to or following the Jan. 20 inauguration of Democratic President-elect Joe Biden. At the same time, Galaviz said the state police is monitoring the potential for violence and coordinating with federal and local partners on intelligence gathering and any necessary response. "While we do not speak to specifics as they pertain to operational and security measures, we are prepared to provide the necessary security for the Statehouse and its adjacent campus," Galaviz said. The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department similarly is working in tandem with state and federal law enforcement agencies ahead of Inauguration Day. "We are aware of the reported social media chatter and will remain focused on monitoring all available intelligence over the coming days and weeks. Officers will continue to have a visible presence at any planned demonstrations in our community and are prepared to intervene should violence or property damage occur," IMPD said.

Stahura sentenced, avoids prison

HAMMOND — Former Whiting Mayor Joseph Stahura is not going to prison for misuse of his campaign contributions ([NWI Times](#)). U.S. District Court Judge James T. Moody imposed a term of two years' probation, 12 months home detention and a \$7,500 fine Wednesday on a man who many

consider a trusted political figure, but who looted his campaign funds to gamble, lend money to his family and cover other personal debts. The 64-year-old Whiting native pleaded guilty Sept. 9 to wire fraud and filing a false tax return, felonies that carry a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. He and the U.S. attorney signed a plea agreement granting him leniency in return for giving up his right to trial and making the government prove its case against him to a jury.

J&J vaccine lags in production



WASHINGTON — Johnson & Johnson expects to release critical results from its Covid-19 vaccine trial in

as little as two weeks — a potential boon in the effort to protect Americans from the coronavirus — but most likely won't be able to provide as many doses this spring as it promised the federal government because of unanticipated manufacturing delays. ([New York Times](#)). Unlike those products, which require two doses, Johnson & Johnson's could need just one, greatly simplifying logistics for local health departments and clinics struggling to get shots in arms. What's more, its vaccine can stay stable in a refrigerator for months, whereas the others have to be frozen. But the encouraging prospect of a third effective vaccine is tempered by apparent lags in the company's production. In the company's \$1 billion contract signed with the federal government in August, Johnson & Johnson pledged to have 12 million doses of its vaccine ready by the end of February, ramping up to a total of 100 million doses by the end of June

70-year-olds now eligible for vaccine

INDIANAPOLIS — Less than six hours after Indiana opened vaccinations for Hoosiers aged 70 to 79 on Wednesday morning, a wave of nearly 60,000 people in that age group had

registered for appointments, the latest sign of a huge pent-up demand for protection against COVID-19 (Russell, [IBJ](#)). "It's almost like a gold rush, but it's a vaccine rush," Gov. Eric Holcomb said during his weekly press briefing. The state will expand eligibility for the vaccine by age group "as quickly as supplies and resources allow," said Dr. Lindsay Weaver, chief medical officer of the Indiana Department of Health. She announced the number of Hoosiers in the 70-79 age group who had secured vaccine appointments through the OurShot.in.gov website or 2-1-1 phone exchange was 59,723 at about 3:15, less than six hours after the state had announced at 10 a.m. that the age group was eligible to get the doses. The state is receiving about 79,000 doses a week of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, but has not heard whether that number could grow to meet huge demand. Indiana has 148 vaccine clinics, at least one per county.

IDOE discussion on reforms

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana State Board of Education continued its discussion of a reworked school accountability system Wednesday with board members bringing suggestions ranging from a new, multi-tiered system to the implementation of individual school dashboard to publicly track and monitor academic progress (Lanich, [NWI Times](#)). "We have a majority opportunity to build a trusted and transparent system with transparent data for our families, for our educators to use," new Indiana Education Secretary Katie Jenner said Wednesday. The discussion follows more than six months of research and feedback collected to overhaul the state's current system after students' low performance on the state's new ILEARN exam showed more than half of Indiana districts would have seen declining A-F accountability grades for the 2018-19 school year.