

## Schmuhl enters INDem chair race

Forming a ticket with Myra Eldridge, Schmuhl has backing of Joe Donnelly

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Less than a year after running Pete Buttigieg’s meteoric \$100 million presidential campaign and three months after he appeared to

pass on a run for Indiana Democratic Party chair, Mike Schmuhl officially kicked off that campaign, running in tandem with

Marion County Clerk Myra Eldridge.

Schmuhl told Howey Politics Indiana that the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and outreach from scores of Hoosier Democrats convinced him to reconsider.



“Jan. 6 really affected me,” said Schmuhl, who has run campaigns for Joe Donnelly and Shelli Yoder. “The presidency of Joe Biden is exciting. The leadership of the DNC under Jaime Harrison, the former state party chair from South Carolina and a person I know, is also exciting. Some of those bigger pieces came together. I also heard from a lot of Democrats from all over the state who were urging me to reconsider. And I did.”

Schmuhl will face off with long-time party operative Trish Whitcomb, who told HPI Wednesday morning, “I continue to get people reaching out to me. I’m glad that we have such talented people who want to be Demo-

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## The mob & Mike Pence

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – For those of us in Indiana who know Mike Pence, Wednesday’s video timeline was absolutely chilling. It is by chance that he survived the Jan. 6 insurrection, that this didn’t become a mass casualty event.



The mob was just seconds and steps away from the vice president, wife Karen and daughter, security video released during Donald Trump’s second impeachment trial revealed. A bloodthirsty crowd was seeking revenge after being goaded by President Trump into attempting to subvert the congressional certification of the Electoral College vote.



**“No more cult of personality. No more big lies. No more looney conspiracy theories. We should cull those things out and move forward. There will be tensions ... as we pivot back toward the party of ideas and purpose.”**

- RNC Committeeman John Hammond III



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

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

**Subscriptions**

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

**Contact HPI**

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

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



U.S. Rep. Stacey Plaskett, one of the House impeachment managers, stated, "Several insurrectionists described what they had planned to do if they encountered the vice president or other lawmakers. One of them, Dominic Pezzola, or 'Spaz,' is a member of the Proud Boys. Pezzola came to the Capitol on Jan. 6 with deadly intentions. He commandeered a Capitol Police shield, smashed a glass window, entered the Capitol and paved the way for dozens of insurrectionists.

"According to an FBI affidavit submitted to the court, the group that was with him at the sack of the Capitol confirmed they were out to murder anyone they got their hands on," Plaskett said. "Here's what the FBI said: 'Other members of the group had talked about what they had done that day. Anyone they got their hands on, they would have killed, including Nancy Pelosi, and they would have killed Mike Pence if they had gotten the chance.' They were talking about assassinating the vice president of the United States. During the course of the attack, the vice president never left the Capitol. He never left the side of his family."

"They were within 100 feet of where the vice president was sheltering with his family, and they were just feet away from the doors of this chamber where many of you remained at that time," Plaskett said.

**The evacuation** took place at 2:26 p.m., 14 minutes after rioters broke into the Capitol. "As Pence was being evacuated, rioters began to spread throughout the Capitol. ... And the mob was looking for Vice President Pence because of his patriotism, because the vice president refused to do what the president demanded and overturn the election results," Plaskett said.

Two minutes before, President

Trump, who was glued to his White House TV, tweeted, "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!"

"Hang Mike Pence! Hang Mike Pence!" the crowd could be heard chanting. Outside the Capitol, where a gallows had been set up, others called out, "Bring out Pence!"



**The video showed** one of the insurrectionists saying, "Pence lied to us, that total treasonous pig. His name will be mud forever." They were also hunting Speaker Nancy Pelosi, with some calling, "Where are you, Nancy? We're looking for you!"

"Again, that was a mob sent by the president of the United States to stop the certification of an election," Plaskett told the Senate in her conclusion. "President Trump put a target on their backs and his mob broke into the Capitol to hunt them down."

Fox News host Chris Wallace says there is now "residual bitterness" between Pence and Trump. "That weekend, some members of

the Pence team called me up ... to make it clear — this is how angry the Pence team was — that Donald Trump never called Mike Pence when he was in the bunker inside the Capitol, to ask him if he was safe, to inquire about his safety, nor did he ever urge the people who were storming the Capitol to stand down and not to go after Mike Pence.”

**Pence’s team said Trump’s** failure to call off the mob and ensure the safety of his loyal second-in-command represented the “ultimate betrayal,” Wallace explained. They felt they did “everything we could for four years to serve you, to stand by you,” Wallace said. “You asked us to do something that was a constitutional impossibility, and then you didn’t protect us when the mob came to — literally to try to find him [Pence]’ and to, in the minds of some of them, to execute him.”

Earlier Wednesday afternoon, U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin of Virginia said, “Donald Trump surrendered his role as commander-in-chief and became the inciter-in-chief of a dangerous insurrection. He told them to fight like hell and they brought us hell that day.”

“Fight like hell or you won’t have a country anymore,” Trump said at the Ellipse just minutes before. The video shows many in the mob echoing Trump’s challenge to “overturn” the election results.

Raskin said that Trump “watched it like a reality show.” He never called out the National Guard. At 6 p.m., President Trump tweeted, “Remember this day forever.”

**Another impeachment** manager, U.S. Rep. Joe Neguse of Colorado, traced this mob v. lawmaker showdown to last spring when Trump knew he would be challenged by Democrat Joe Biden. “Let’s start with the Big Lie,” Neguse said. “The president realized really by last spring that he could lose, he might lose the election. So what did he do? He started planting the seeds to get some of his supporters ready by saying that he could only lose the election if it was stolen.”

Other extremely disturbing video showed insurrectionists using bear spray against Capitol Police, as well as American flags on poles. Another officer’s body cam footage showed him pummeled by the mob There was the often seen video of Officer Daniel Hodges being crushed in a Capitol doorway, screaming out in pain.

“Rioters crushed Officer Hodges,” another im-

peachment manager, Rep. Eric Swalwell said. “He was wedged in the doorway, blood dripping from his mouth. He was struggling to breathe. All while the insurrectionists hit him.”

Five people were killed in the melee, including Capitol Officer Brian Sicknick, who was bludgeoned to death with a fire extinguisher. Two other Capitol officers have committed suicide since Jan. 6. More than 140 officers were injured during the confrontation, suffering broken ribs, gouged eyes.

On Tuesday, Raskin made the case that impeaching an ex-president was constitutional. He said that there should be no “January exemption” for a president attempting to steal an election, which he said is what Trump was attempting to do.

Raskin said Trump was responsible for the historic destruction of the Capitol. “You ask what a high crime and misdemeanor is under our Constitution? That’s a high crime and misdemeanor. If that’s not an impeachable offense, then there is no such thing.”

**Indiana Sens. Todd Young** and Mike Braun, who were mostly silent during the months the “big lie” that laid the groundwork for Jan. 6, both voted in the minority on the question of the constitutionality of the trial.

Braun said in a statement on Tuesday, “As I have stated earlier, the framers of the Constitution never intended for the Senate to hold a trial to remove a former President from an office he no longer holds, which is why I voted against the constitutionality of former president Trump’s impeachment trial.”

Asked for his reaction to Wednesday’s presentation, Braun told CNN, “Same way I was before. If I think the process is flawed, how do I convict?”

Which leads to the question I and many others have: How could you be a colleague, ally or friend of Mike Pence and his family and not be horrified that they came within minutes of literally being torn apart by a mob? Even more distressing, by a mob unleashed by the president, who might return to office in four years unless he’s disqualified from office this month.

I’ve never seen anything like this in 40 years of reporting. ❖

## Schmuhl, from page 1

cratic chair.” Whitcomb said that there are still a number of Central Committee members who are not committed to a candidate.

Former senator Joe Donnelly told HPI Wednesday afternoon that he is backing Schmuhl. “Mike has my backing, and he will do an outstanding job,” Donnelly said.

Schmuhl said, “I have been



**Mike Schmuhl with Pete Buttigieg, Joe Donnelly and Mel Hall.**

in contact with all members of the Central Committee. I wanted to get their feedback before I made a decision unilaterally. I wanted to get their insights and experience and really absorb all of that so I could make stronger decisions and have better ideas.”

In a press release,

Schmuhl, 38, of South Bend, explained, "We are at a turning point for both our party and our state. The Indiana Democratic Party needs a fresh vision and a strategic plan to start winning again to improve the lives of Hoosiers in every part and corner of our state."

Eldridge added, "The time is now for our state party to restore, cultivate, grow, and take action for the future of our democracy. I look forward to speaking with Democrats across Indiana with Mike as I start my campaign for vice chair of our party."

Schmuhl managed the 2010 reelection campaign of then-U.S. Rep. Donnelly in his race against Republican Jackie Walorski. After narrowly winning, Donnelly opted for the 2012 U.S. Senate race, which he won. Schmuhl also was involved in unsuccessful congressional campaigns of Mel Hall in the 2nd CD and Shelli Yoder in the 9th CD. But he found conspicuous national prominence when he managed the 2020 presidential campaign of boyhood friend Pete Buttigieg, who went from a dark horse figure to winning the Iowa caucuses before narrowly losing the New Hampshire primary to Bernie Sanders.

The Buttigieg campaign ended soon after U.S. Rep. James Clyburn endorsed Joe Biden, who went on an impressive Super Tuesday run to forge a huge lead. Buttigieg then endorsed Biden, helping him secure the nomination.

Buttigieg became the youngest candidate in the race and the first LGBTQ presidential candidate in American history to win national party delegates after his first place finish in the Iowa caucuses. The campaign team grew to nearly 600 staff members with a budget of \$100 million. Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, was sworn in as the U.S. secretary of transportation in President Joe Biden's administration last week.

Schmuhl and Eldridge were joined by voices of support from the central, northern, and southern parts of the Hoosier State. Cordelia Lewis-Burks, a longtime Indiana Democratic Party and AFSCME leader, voiced her support for Schmuhl and Eldridge. "As the party's outgoing vice chair and a long-time DNC member, I have had the pleasure of working with Mike Schmuhl as he's organized to elect Democrats at every level," Lewis-Burks said. "Those experiences, including his work on the Pete for America campaign, are proof that he can bring our big tent together and win races up and down the ballot. I am proud to support Mike and Clerk Eldridge in this year's reorganization and I'm confident they will help move the Indiana Democratic Party forward in the years to come."

Arielle Brandy, the president of Indiana Young Democrats, also endorsed Schmuhl and Eldridge. "The

Indiana Democratic Party is in need of bold leadership that is ready to take on challenges, bring an innovative mindset that not only just elects Democrats into office, but is willing to make intentional investments into communities across the state that are eager for change and a seat at the table," Brandy commented. "I know that with the leadership of Mike and Myla, our party will be able to leverage the talent, skills and organizing ability of Young Hoosiers and marginalized communities that are tired of sitting and waiting their turn in party politics."

Patti Yount, the Democratic National Committee member from southern Indiana who has been involved in campaigns and state party building efforts since the 1960s, added, "Indiana faces major challenges in the years ahead, from struggling family farms to urban areas tackling big city problems. To be successful, the Indiana Democratic Party needs a common-sense message that can bring people together and win races in every corner of the state. Mike has a proven track record of doing just that, and I'm proud to lend my support to his candidacy."

The Indiana Democratic Party State Central Committee selects the next chair, vice chair, and other officers during the reorganizational meeting on March 20.

HPI conducted this interview with Schmuhl Wednesday morning:

**HPI:** Walk me through the evolution where you said in November that you weren't going to seek the chair, to this month when you've entered the race.

**Schmuhl:** I just had time to reflect over the last two weeks about our state and its future. A few things happened: Jan. 6 really affected me. The presidency of Joe Biden is exciting. The leadership of the DNC under Jaime Harrison, the former state party chair from South Carolina and a person I know, is also exciting. Some of those bigger pieces came together. I also heard from a lot of Democrats from all over the state who were urging me to reconsider. And I did. I spent the last 10 years working on Hoosier campaigns from municipal level all the way up to the presidential level. I gained a lot of skills, expertise and experience. I just couldn't sit out the next few years when I believe our state and our party are at a real turning point.

**HPI:** Did Sen. Donnelly encourage you to run? And is he backing your effort?

**Schmuhl:** You'd have to ask him. But, yes, Joe is my first boss and gave me my first shot at running a campaign in 2010. He's always been a big supporter and a good friend.

**HPI:** I've witnessed one Democratic Party rebuild,



Marion County Clerk Myra Eldridge

coming back in the 1980s with Evan Bayh. How do you rebuild the party in Indiana without that type of charismatic or next generation candidate?

**Schmuhl:** It's challenging. We don't have a statewide elected official. That is something that should be a goal of ours. What we need to do is blend two things. We need to blend the traditional values that we have as a party. You know, in my lifetime, there has been more of a balance in terms of partisanship than one would realize. Republicans have the upper hand right now, but that hasn't always been the case, so I think we need to blend the traditions and where we come from with new ideas and innovative strategies, new candidates with fresh visions for the Hoosier State. I believe I have a mix of both. I've always valued the experiences of those who have come before me. But I've always tried to embrace new tactics and bring new and younger people into the process. I think that mix can help us turn the corner and be successful and build a bigger bench for the Indiana Democratic Party for years to come.

**HPI:** What you and Mayor Pete did last year was extraordinary. What are the key lessons or takeaways you can take from that \$100 million presidential campaign and bring to the Indiana Democratic Party?

**Schmuhl:** I would urge folks to look at what we did in Iowa, which is a similar state to Indiana in terms of its size, its rural features, and its one big city; it's in the heartland. I would like to duplicate some of that in the Hoosier State. Some of the bigger lessons would be going everywhere and talking to everybody. One thing that people noticed on the campaign was Mayor ... now Secretary Pete, and his willingness to talk to everybody, to talk to any outlet, and to talk to any voter. That sort of open source and open media strategy really made the difference because he was a new entity, he was a new candidate, was young, unique last name, he was a mayor from the Midwest, he wasn't a senator or a governor, he wasn't a former vice president and so we really had to go everywhere and spread our message. Indiana Democrats can look at that strategy and run that game plan in years ahead.

**HPI:** Another criticism of the party during the Bayh era was that it was "Republican lite" as opposed to presenting a true contrast. Instead of choosing a true path on its own, it tried to be just a little less conservative than the GOP. By 2010, many Democrats in traditional party strongholds along the Wabash and Ohio rivers just decided to become Republican. Fast forward to 2016 when we had both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders win presidential primaries in Indiana without any establishment support from either major party. Are there lessons to be learned

from these disconnects?

**Schmuhl:** Yes. I am a Democrat because I think we are a party that takes in a lot of different people and a lot of different viewpoints. That's a healthy and positive dynamic. We need to recruit candidates across Indiana who represent communities they live in and the communities they want to serve. So a candidate might be different in Marion County than one from a rural county. That's OK. We need to recruit candidates for offices that really match

the people they're trying to serve. One can argue there are really four political parties in the United States at the moment: There is a left party, there is a center left party, there is a sort of center right party and there is a Trump party. I think most people in the United States and most Hoosiers would be somewhat in the middle and want a lot of the same things. A lot of media channels and other tactics have made people so polarized in primaries and elections and we need to try to break that

so people can start to listen to one another again so they can make good decisions for their families and communities.

**HPI:** What did Jan. 6 mean to you? I thought the video presented by the House impeachment managers was damning. We're now seeing real hatred for Democrats from rank-and-file Republicans, when a generation ago they just disagreed on issues.

**Schmuhl:** There is a toxicity that is really harmful to our democracy. Small town Indiana doesn't have newspapers of record any more. The newspaper of record in a small town in Indiana is Facebook; it's social media and it is national television news. In those dynamics and in people's daily lives, an echo chamber was created and people gravitate toward voices who are right in their face all of the time. We've all seen a proliferation of misinformation, so-called "fake news" and slanted journalism, and that's all tremendously harmful. At the very, very local level, there is still some coverage. You sort of know who your mayor is and who's on the city council. At the national level, it's well-covered and people know the players and know what's going on with the president every day. That middle level doesn't get as much coverage. Statehouse reporters are ... filing regularly, but a lot of that news isn't getting to folks across Indiana; how their state rep or senator is voting. In the absence of that knowledge and with such dramatic one-party control, that's unhealthy. When left to their own devices, harmful strains come out of a dominant caucus. More Hoosiers want fairness, equity, and more balance across the board.



**HPI:** So is one of your challenges to form a new local news ecosystem, say, local Facebook pages?

**Schmuhl:** I am approaching this with sort of a blank canvas. I think we need to reimagine the future of not just our state, but the party. I really believe that. Nothing is off the table. Hoosiers are kind and smart, straight forward people and they deserve a government that backs those characteristics. So nothing is off the table. I really, really want to embrace a strategy that people can believe in and get us on a course to winning elections again, and improving the lives of people across the state.

**HPI:** You're teaming up with Myra Eldridge. Talk about your relationship with the clerk and why you decided to form a team.

**Schmuhl:** The out-going vice chairwoman,

Cordelia Lewis-Burks, was such a force. Her experience with the party as well as AFSCME was really, really meaningful to our party. I thought it was essential that the top part of our party governance structure had strong female leadership and one of color. I am really grateful that Clerk Eldridge stepped up. Another good reason we're a good team is I'm from Northern Indiana, she's from Central Indiana. I have spent most of my career at the federal level on campaigns. She's been at the local and county level in public service. I think that's a nice mix. She's also an election rights advocate and I think that's going to be really, really important moving forward and a critical part of our strategy. She's had experience in recruiting people and running elections and that's going to be essential to our success in the future. ❖

## Hammond, Hupfer survey a post-Trump, post-Jan. 6 GOP pivot

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS – With House Democratic impeachment managers establishing a powerful video case against former president Donald Trump, one of Indiana's Republican National Committee members believes it's time for the party to pivot back to its roots.

"The Republican Party will continue to be, as it has been since 1854, a party of ideas and conservative principles that a large segment of America should be able to gather under," John Hammond III told Howe Politics Indiana on Wednesday. "No more cult of personality. No more big lies. No more looney conspiracy theories. We should cull those things out and move forward. There will be tensions as we come out of this period of time as we pivot back toward the party of ideas and purpose, but that's where we're headed."

**It comes as Reuters** reports this morning that talks of forming an anti-Trump party are in early stage discussions and include former elected Republicans, former officials in the Republican administrations of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Trump, ex-Republican ambassadors and Republican strategists, the people involved say. "More than 120 of them held a Zoom call last Friday to discuss the breakaway group, which would run on a platform of 'principled conservatism,' including adherence to the Constitution and the rule of law – ideas those involved say have been trashed by Trump."

Asked about the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on

Jan. 6, Hammond said, "I was devastated, disgusted about what was going on in real time as we all watched it. There was no one who watched it who could justify anything that happened with the breach of security, the violence at the Capitol and the deaths that occurred. It was surreal and sad. I know for those who were inside the Capitol, it was a terrifying time."

**Hammond was also** effusive in his praise for how Vice President Mike Pence handled himself in the final weeks of the Trump administration. "I couldn't have been prouder of Mike Pence to rise above all of this," Hammond said. "He did what every vice president had to do, to hold his oath of office and his allegiance to the constitution and the republic. Mike Pence, I think you can say, saved the republic."

Pence was under serious pressure from President Trump to use his ceremonial post in the congressional certification of the Electoral College results on Jan. 6 to subvert the will of the people. Pence refused, setting up the stunning scene of Trump unleashing a MAGA mob at the Ellipse toward the Capitol, with many chanting, "Hang Mike Pence."

Hammond explained, "Traditional and conservative Republicans were an important factor that put Pence on the ticket in 2016."

He lauded the Trump administration for bringing on regulatory reform and judicial appointments that were center right. "There were just a series of benefits," Hammond said. "Elections have consequences. Many good things were accomplished."

But in the end it culminated in Trump's defeat on Nov. 3 and then the violence and tragedy on Jan. 6.

"Those things were inflicted by the unconventional personality of the leader, the president. We did our best to accomplish the things we could accomplish. Some of us saw this coming a country mile away. From my perspec-



tive, I could not have imagined the result that came at the end of this Electoral College process. It was shocking and a real disappointment.”

Hammond talked to HPI following the announcement last week that Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer was named RNC general counsel. He called Hupfer “uniquely qualified” for the post, which he noted, was occupied by Reince Priebus before he became national chairman in 2013.

“His ascendency is a confirmation of the Midwestern battleground as well as how our values have allowed us to bring a more common sense approach to the party,” Hammond said.

### Hupfer acknowledged

the GOP is grappling with the fallout from the Jan. 6 Capitol riot. “We are having a debate within the party,” he said in a Zoom call with HPI on Monday. “There are obviously a spectrum of ideas within the party. There are obviously some that are unacceptable to the party. There are somethings that are unacceptable anywhere, such as storming the U.S. Capitol Building.

“We need to focus on what our ideals are inside the party,” Hupfer continued. “That’s where we always come back to our conservative principles: Fiscal policy like we have here in Indiana; the protection of our rights such as the right to bear arms, protection of life. I think as a national party, as we sit here today with the extreme left agenda that is being put together by President Biden, it is time for Republicans come together as to what are real issues are, which is the deterioration of our moral the fiscal fiber in this country versus trying to fighting with each other.”

Asked to define the “conservative pillars” in the emerging post-Trump era, Hupfer said, “I think we can look to Indiana as a good example. Dating back to when we took this state over as a party with Gov. Daniels, we’ve been focused on balanced budgets, living within our means, maintaining a surplus, what we’ve seen during this pandemic where we’re thriving from a fiscal standpoint. We still have a surplus and are in a position where we fully fund our budgets, but look at ways to accelerate the growth this state economically.

“The governor is coming out with a major recovery plan,” Hupfer continued. “Hundreds of millions of dollars are in it and it could really put Indiana at the top of the heap when coming out of COVID. I think fiscal restraint has been the hallmark here in Indiana. It’s obviously a different game out in Washington. We need more of Indiana in Washington and less Washington here in Indiana. That is certainly the type of conservative Republican who has served Indiana well.”

Hupfer called Trump’s second impeachment “a fol-

ly,” adding, “There is no purpose to it. He’s not going to be (convicted). Any legitimate constitutional lawyer has real concerns about impeachment after leaving office. It’s just political gamesmanship we see in Washington. We have to get past this constant partisan bickering and, again, do what we do here in Indiana, which is to find solutions to problems. We have consistently had solutions that Hoosiers have found competent and been beneficial to their lives. That’s what we have to get back to in Washington.”

As for his new role as RNC general counsel, Hupfer said, “I’m excited with working with Chair McDaniel. There is going to be a lot of legal focus with party, forward looking on ballot integrity and systems put into place by legislators feature safety and security.”

He said that over the course of the 2024 election cycle, as general counsel he will be dealing with convention site selection, convention rules, debates and ultimately putting on the convention. “It’s a good reflection on what we’ve done here in Indiana and that’s respected across the country, from the strength of our party, from the election results is reflected in this appointment.”

As for the coming delay in U.S. Census data and the reapportionment process, Hupfer doesn’t expect to spend much time on those issues as general counsel, but will be involved in Indiana redistricting. He doesn’t expect the new maps to emerge from an Indiana General Assembly special session until August or September.

“The RNC will provide some assistance,” he said. “Right now I don’t believe I’ll be involved in other states. There will be other folks who will concentrate on redistricting, since it happens on the legislative side. Here in Indiana we’ve had a solid history of drawing fair, compact districts, keeping communities of interest together.”

Asked about the lack of competition with the current maps drawn in 2011, Hupfer said that with 88% of county offices held by Republicans, it will be hard to carve out many Democratic legislative and congressional districts.

“Those county lines were drawn a long time ago. I just think it reflects the strength of the Republican Party in this state,” Hupfer said. “This is a Republican state. For folks to go and try to create competitive districts would require some extreme gerrymandering. In most areas, there’s no way to do it. Pull out the maps. We’ve done a lot of analysis on the past races. There are significant swaths throughout the state where we were absolutely dominant and there’s no place to draw districts where Democrats could win in those areas.” ❖



# Another letter to QAnon

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Dear Q, It's Jack again. I wrote to you in a column back in August. You didn't write back. But I'm sure you know about my questions. Your QAnon followers say you know everything, including when The Storm will come to destroy the satanic pedophiles engaging in child-trafficking and child-cannibalizing and controlling our country. They don't sound very nice.



Well, Q, I guess you couldn't reply because you've been really busy. I mean, QAnon was busy getting Marjorie Taylor Greene elected to Congress. She really speaks up, calling 9/11 a hoax and saying that supposed shooting of little kids at Sandy Hook Elementary School was a hoax. She's a real leader, getting a standing ovation from the House QAnon Caucus. And you relentlessly promote Pizzagate, about Hillary Clinton molesting children in that Washington pizzeria. She

shouldn't do that.

You were busy predicting things like an Oct. 17 appearance of John F. Kennedy Jr. at a Trump rally. He was to be named the vice presidential nominee, replacing Mike Pence. Wow! Guess you were for hanging Pence even back then. But JFK Jr. didn't show up. Must have had other plans that day. Talk about busy, you did a lot of planning for storming the Capitol.

Now, some of your followers dare to question your predictions. They worry that you predicted too many times that The Storm was about to hit, with Donald Trump, then president, declaring martial law to bring down the evil cabal of global elites, Hollywood celebrities, Democratic officials and their news media apologists. If you were a TV weather forecaster, you'd lose viewers by so often predicting a big storm that never comes.

**You always explain** why The Storm is delayed. Yet, some of your followers lose faith, turning away from QAnon to embrace instead violent white-supremacist and neo-Nazi militia groups with similar objectives. They even question whether you exist.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Q. Maybe you, Q, aren't just one person. Maybe you're a group of conspiracy theorists or some profiting entrepreneurs. But your QAnon does exist. You can drive supporters to riot. Still, you didn't get Trump reelected to fulfill your prophesy that he, in a secret war with the cabal, would bring it down with mass arrests and harsh justice, very harsh. Like gallows.

Your followers storming the Capitol were sure that Jan. 6 was The Storm, the big one. They joined with other

protesters in killing and injuring cops and ransacking the Capitol. Good start. Alas, they didn't hang Pence, shoot Nancy Pelosi or stop certification of Joe Biden, the choice of the child traffickers. But wait! The Storm was just delayed. Your faithful believed the prediction that it actually would hit on inauguration day. They expected Biden and other cabal conspirators at his fake ceremony to be hauled away. Trump still president.

**I'm sure you understand** how some QAnon believers were disheartened to see Trump board Air Force One for Florida. But wait! They figured it was a distraction. Trump would zoom back to retain his presidency, no doubt for life. Democracy restored. Trump didn't return. He wimped out on martial law and a violent coup. And you, Q, are being abandoned by some of your QAnon faithless faithful.

But wait! The Storm still could come on inauguration day, the traditional inauguration day, March 4. That was inauguration day throughout most of the nation's history. Then some fake amendment in 1933 moved it to Jan. 20. So, Q, I hear the prediction now is for The Storm to hit on March 4. Will it hit then to vanquish Biden, restore Trump to power and save those kids in that Washington pizzeria? And maybe JFK Jr. will show up this time to be vice president.

Please, Q, write back this time. Sincerely, sort of,  
**Jack ❖**

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

# QAnon and the GOP congresswoman

By KELLY HAWES  
CNHI News Bureau

ANDERSON – House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy sees unity in his caucus. "Two years from now, we're going to win the majority," he told reporters. "That's because this conference is more united. We've got the right leadership team behind it."

I'm not so sure. When 61 members of the conference vote to remove Liz Cheney from her leadership position because she supported Donald Trump's impeachment, does that represent unity? And what about the 11 Republicans who voted to strip fellow Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene of her committee assignments? Is that unity, too?

Among the 11 Republicans who joined that second vote was Adam Kinzinger of Illinois,





a critic of McCarthy's leadership. "He needs to stand for truth, and he needs to recognize this party, the future, is not going down to Mar-a-Lago and being with Donald Trump," Kinzinger told CNN the day after a closed-door meeting of the Republican caucus.

**Kinzinger expressed** disappointment with what happened when Greene spoke during that meeting. "I don't like to reveal a ton of conference details, but she stood up and kind of gave a bit of contriteness, but then it pivoted to 'they're coming after you next,'" he said. "Obviously, I had a huge problem with all of that, but the 'they,' being the Democrats, I think if you're not buying into Jewish space lasers and false flag operations and QAnon stuff, to think that they're just going to come after you next, I think is way a bridge too far."

Not everyone shared his concern. Some actually stood and applauded her remarks, a fact Kinzinger described as "disappointing by a factor of 1,000." For the record, McCarthy did condemn Greene's past positions, suggesting she needed to steer clear of them as a member of the House of Representatives. "I hold her to her word, as well as her actions going forward," he said.

Both McCarthy and Greene suggested her wacky positions were ancient history. "I never once said any of the things that I am being accused of today during my campaign," Greene said on the House floor. "I never said any of these things since I have been elected for Congress. These were words of the past and these things do not represent me."

To be honest, she doesn't seem all that contrite. "Today's the day I could be removed from committees, or worse, expelled from Congress," she wrote on social media that same day. "Why? Because I stood up for President Trump. I stand for America First. I filed Articles of Impeachment against Joe Biden, and I speak the truth."

How should her supporters respond? Well, contribute to her campaign, of course. As for how she got elected in the first place, you can blame it on a district that is so tilted in favor of Republicans the election was effectively over in the primary.

**Back in the day when** the Democratic Party had a stranglehold on the South, political observers coined the phrase, "Yellow Dog Democrats." These were Democrats who would vote for a yellow dog before voting for a Republican. Now voters in some of those same states have switched their allegiance, and those yellow dogs are showing up on the Republican side of the ballot.

No Democrat has ever held the seat Greene now occupies. The district first had an election in 2012, the year Georgia added a 14th congressional seat thanks to the 2010 Census. In 2017, the Cook Political Report ranked the district 10th in the country for its concentration of Republican voters. This district is deep red, and it's likely to remain that way.

In other words, the only candidate that could deprive Greene of her seat would be another Republican. Do you suppose McCarthy will campaign for her? ❖

## Remembering the late First Lady Susan Bayh

By **DAVE KITCHELL**

LOGANSPOUR – In a moment of a state Democratic dinner evening in the 1980s, there was a foreshadowing that brought hope to a moribund reality – 20 consecutive years of Republican rule.



An Evan Bayh in his 30s stood up, holding the hand of his wife, Susan. In perfect unison, they pivoted 180 degrees to acknowledge everyone in every corner of the ballroom. Without saying a word, they received an ovation. There was swelling optimism filling the room, and the kind of hope that builds to victories in May and November. It was the first wave of a sea change about to happen in Indiana politics.

At that precise moment, the husband of an Indiana legislator turned to me and said, "Yep, he's running."

That affirmation meant that an Indiana secretary of state who had narrowly defeated the son of a former governor to win the third highest office in the state was about to throw his hat in the ring against Lt. Gov. John Mutz. It wouldn't be easy because in the middle of the Reagan Revolution, Mutz was the state's chief cheerleader for economic development. Many a Las Vegas betting parlor would have placed prohibitive odds that Mutz could not lose.

What transpired in the months following took Indiana from having the oldest governor in the nation to the youngest. It happened in part because the Bayh name resonated with voters who remembered his father. It happened in part because it was just time for a fresh party to reset the dynamics of the Indiana political scene. And it happened in no small measure because of Susan Bayh. She looked like what you would want your First Lady to be, and her effusive spirit and smile had an infectious way of renewing faith in the expectations of political office.

**Make no mistake about it,** Susan Bayh looked and acted the part of what a first lady of something should be. It's a moment I recall fondly now as we absorb the shock of her sudden passing. A former Miss Southern California, a former Rose Bowl princess, a former attorney and a wife and mother, she was a presence who could stand on her own, far more than a beauty queen or a wife with connections.

At a speaking engagement she once keynoted, she unleashed a self-deprecating humor. She shared her husband's eagerness to meet a future Republican governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, recalling the moment he received a T-shirt from Schwarzenegger. Evan was proud to say he

and Arnold had the same chest size, but with Susan imitating Arnold's trademark accent, she said, "No, Evan, that is Danny DeVito's shirt, not mine."

In that sense, she was very down to earth. In the larger sense, she proved that she didn't want to be a First Lady who stayed in the governor's residence, happily hosting ceremonial teas. She was out and about the state, meeting with groups of all sizes and stripes. While the former governor's worst critics might have claimed him to be too formal at times, Susan was the warmth and fresh spirit that made you not only believe in her, but believe in her husband and what they had to bring to Indiana's table.

**She was the kind of person** who would speak to you on the streets of Indianapolis, and the type of person more spouses of public officials should be – involved, concerned and willing to accept a family's time in public life as not just an opportunity, but a responsibility.

Her husband's 2016 campaign to win a third U.S. Senate term was bittersweet. Susan was still on a statewide bus tour with Evan, but it would be their last. She acknowledged in campaign commercials what kind of caring husband she had during a time when she had endured cancer. Unfortunately, it wasn't the time for another storybook ending far past a golden wedding anniversary.

While the biography of Susan Bayh has ended far too soon, it is one that reflects the spirit and impact of a woman who made the Midwest her home and served our home state as few ever have. As Hoosiers mourn her loss, we know how the Beach Boys felt. We wish all our First Ladies could be California girls who grow up to be Susan Bayhs. ❖

**Kitchell is the former mayor of Logansport.**

## Good foreign policy is good domestically

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – There was an interesting moment in Washington at the end of January, on Antony Blinken's first full day as secretary of state. Meeting with the press corps that covers the State Department, he called an independent press "a cornerstone of our democracy," and told the assembled reporters, "You keep the American people and the world informed about what we do here. That's key to our mission."



I have no doubt that there will be plenty of tense moments between Blinken and the journalists who cover U.S. foreign policy. But Blinken's comment – meant to

signal a change from the hostile relationship that developed under the previous administration – underscored a key facet of American diplomacy: What happens at home affects our posture and capabilities abroad. Just as important, how we conduct ourselves abroad says a great deal about who we are at home.

**One way to think about** this is to imagine a foreign policy that puts us at the forefront of curbing human rights abuses around the world or that makes certain that in cases of major natural disasters, the U.S. leads the way in providing disaster relief. These actions send messages about who we are as a nation, and as the American people, that resonate with ordinary people the world over, even if foreign regimes sometimes resent them.

Boiled down, we ought not to apologize for trying to do the right thing as a country. If we can be a factor

democratic processes – over the right to vote and the way those votes are counted – leave us weaker abroad. It is hard to take the greatest democracy in the world seriously when many of its elected leaders were willing to seek to overturn the results of a legitimate election, or when state leaders pursue policies aimed at limiting the ability of voters to cast their ballots.

**In the end, you cannot** separate foreign and domestic policy. They are different aspects of the same world. What you do with respect to one affects the other.

Over the next few years, if we can do the right thing regarding domestic issues, from the environment to ballot access to the economy, it will strengthen our hand in foreign policy, since of course the rest of the world watches us closely. And if we can use our dealings and posture abroad to stand for the best of American ideal – promoting decency, respecting individuals' rights, settling disputes as often as possible through responsible negotiation, nurturing democracy and the institutions that sustain it – we will undoubtedly reap the benefits at home through strong political and economic relationships, healthy alliances with friendly nations, and a position as a world leader widely seen as deserving the role. ❖

**Lee Hamilton is a senior advisor for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government; a distinguished scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies; and a professor of practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.**

# The governor needs flexibility in crisis

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – There’s a reason that President Truman had a sign on his desk reading “The Buck Stops Here” that became ingrained in American culture. There’s a reason that a statue of Gov. Oliver P. Morton along with two Union soldiers guards the east entrance to the Indiana Statehouse. And there’s a reason you have to go back a generation to find a former legislator ascending to the governor’s office.



These reasons all point to one critical thing: Leadership. In the case of Morton and Truman, they rose to power and made crucial and astute decisions in trying times with no playbook. Just like Gov. Eric Holcomb and 49 of his American counterparts did beginning about a year ago with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Holcomb is now faced with an Indiana General Assembly trying to whittle away what little power an Indiana governor has.

On Monday, the Senate overrode Holcomb’s veto of SEA148 (Senate Enrolled Act 148) which would prevent all local governments from regulating any aspect of landlord-tenant relationships. The motivation was a reaction to tenant protections that the Indianapolis City-County Council passed and Mayor Joe Hogsett signed last spring. In ordinary times, these decisions would end up on a mayor’s desk.

There is a bill that would take the responsibility of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department from the mayor and put it into the hands of a board chosen by state and local officials. In normal times, it would be the mayor of Indianapolis who would take responsibility for IMPD and would be held accountable twice – in the primary and general elections – every four years.

And there are efforts to crimp the governor’s power that he exercised 55 times via executive orders since the pandemic began in March 2020. Included in this legislation would be exemptions for churches during pandemic shutdown orders. A previous version of the bill sponsored by House Majority Leader Matt Lehman would have required the General Assembly to be called into session for an extension of a governor’s emergency order beyond 60 days, according to WIBC’S Eric Berman.

“It’s just at any time during those extensions, the

legislative body may say, ‘OK, the third extension we need to come back and at least have a discussion,’” said Lehman, R-Berne.

Other legislation by State Rep. Bob Morris would prohibit the governor from placing restrictions on any business’s capacity or operating hours. It would block the governor from suspending elective surgeries at hospitals.

Holcomb has been operating under I.C. 10-14-3-12, or the “Disaster emergencies; emergency gubernatorial powers” law, that was passed in 2010. The governor can declare a disaster emergency by executive order or proclamation “if the governor determines that a disaster has occurred or that the occurrence or threat of a disaster is imminent.” The statute allows the governor to renew executive orders every 30 days.

**In essence**, Indiana Code gives a governor broad powers. The governor is the “commander-in-chief of the organized and unorganized militia and of all other forces available for emergency duty.” He or she can commandeer private property, move state employees, order the evacuation of endangered areas, control the “ingress and egress” to such an areas, suspend or limit the sale and transportation of alcoholic beverages, explosives or combustibles, provide emergency housing, allow out-state licensed personnel to operate in the state, and give specific authority to allocate drugs, foodstuffs, and other essential materials and services.

According to the Banks & Bower legal blog, Indiana case law is very limited on this statute. Most of it is in relation to a governor declaring martial law. In *Cox vs. McNutt*, D. Ind. 1935, 12 F.Supp. 355, the court generally found that the governor had wide discretion in determining whether an emergency existed requiring the utilization of military forces, and if he determined that exigency existed the courts would not interfere therewith.

To put these bills into context, it’s important to understand what leaders like Gov. Holcomb were facing a little more than a year ago.

When COVID-19 caught the attention of U.S. officials, there were so many unknowns: How did it spread? Who was susceptible? How lethal was it? Would it impact children and adults or the elderly differently? Could it swamp local and state medical systems? Could it be spread in school classrooms?

Holcomb, other governors and President Trump operated with a number of blind spots and came to the



unprecedented decision in mid-March to shut the economy down. It wasn't until early April that the consensus developed that COVID-19 was spread by aerosol particles. Health officials ranging from Surgeon General Jerome Adams and Indiana Health Commissioner Kristina Box were advising against face-masking then (though in Adams's case, it was to preserve the limited availability of N-95 masks for front line health professionals).

By the end of April, the shifting consensus (with the notable exception of Rep. Morris) was that face-masking was the best step prior to vaccine at preventing the spread of the virus.

By January, the shifting consensus was that schools could safely reopen; that COVID-19's lethality was far more dangerous for the elderly than it was for young students.

**Early on in the pandemic**, once it was understood how it spread, the dangers of exposure during church services with singing and shouting came into focus. That led the way for a prioritized social distancing, masking and the frequent practice of personal hygiene.

The point here is that in the midst of the pandemic crisis, it wasn't up to a legislative committee to make the tough decisions. It was up to the president and the governor. The buck would stop with them.

Since then, there was an election in which Holcomb was returned for a second term with a landslide, and Trump was ousted by a more than 7-million-vote plurality. Hoosier voters gave the governor an emphatic OK at how he handled the pandemic. American voters rejected Trump's approach.

Comparing Holcomb and Trump led to obvious conclusions. Holcomb and his team advocated masking and social distancing, while suspending normal political and social activity. Trump proceeded to hold MAGA rallies in arenas without incorporating safety precautions and was

indifferent to stressing masking. The White House became a COVID hotspot. The pandemic has hit the United States harder than just about every other nation, with the death rate soaring toward half a million casualties.

Now let's go to the "what ifs." Like ... what if the next pandemic might be more severe than COVID-19? What if the next pandemic is far more lethal for children? Or is far more transmissible? Preventing the governor from shutting down schools or churches in the wake of a pandemic would severely limit the executive response, potentially creating a more arduous crisis.

**Joshua Claybourn**, Evansville attorney and HPI contributor, observed in January: "By separating powers among branches, the Founders sought to safeguard against tyranny. We need separation of powers and checks and balances not merely in spite of emergencies, but often because of them. A strict separation of powers is more, not less, important during crises. Indiana legislators should revise our emergency power laws to incorporate more checks and balances while maintaining a streamlined, flexible legal system for emergency response."

The fact that there were few calls for a General Assembly special session during the first nine months of the pandemic means that Gov. Holcomb and staff were in what he calls "constant" contact with legislative leadership.

It's important that the emergency laws be reviewed and updated in the sense that this time we were dealing with a pandemic as opposed to a flood or tornado outbreak, or civil strife. But it's also important for the General Assembly not to force emphatic prohibitions. More checks and balances are fine. But anything that would crimp a future governor's flexibility in dealing with a wicked curve ball could have disastrous impacts down the road.

The buck should stop with the governor. ❖

## House panel passes bill setting standards for renewable energy

### Howey Politics Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS — A bill that would set statewide standards for large wind and solar projects in Indiana passed a House committee on Wednesday morning, following a passionate debate between renewable energy advocates and a group of residents and local officials who said the bill would take away local control (Erdody, [IBJ](#)). The House Utilities Committee approved the bill, HB 1381, by a 12-1 vote. The measure would set standards on setbacks, heights and other facets of commercial projects across Indiana's 92 counties, replacing an assortment of

local regulations. It could have large ramifications in Indiana, a state where wind and solar projects are booming as utilities and large companies demand renewable energy. Since 2008, developers have installed more than 1,000 wind turbines across the state, chiefly on 16 large wind



farms, that crank out more than 2,000 megawatts of electricity—enough to power more than 1 million homes. Developers have zeroed in on the state, in part, because its flat terrain, especially in northern Indiana, leads to higher wind speeds. More than 1,000 megawatts of new wind capacity are under construction or in advanced development. But some projects have run into setbacks in recent years, as some counties have restricted wind farms, saying they are too large and intrusive. As a result, developers have clamored for state standards, saying they

are tired of negotiating a hodgepodge of local laws before moving forward with projects, or seeing them canceled at the last minute, after huge upfront investments. The bill's supporters included the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, the Clean Grid Alliance, Hoosiers for Renewables, a group of large industrial manufacturers, and developers of renewable energy. The state's 22 largest manufacturers, including drugmaker Eli Lilly and Co. and manufacturer Allison Transmission, also support the bill, saying they want to buy more renewable energy.

### **Gutwein won't hear House environment bills**

Thirteen bills addressing state environmental issues will likely never see the light of day. House Environmental Affairs Committee chair, Rep. Doug Gutwein (R-Francesville), said he won't hold hearings for any of the bills assigned to that committee this session (Thiele, [Indiana Public Media](#)). Gutwein said revised rules from the federal Environmental Protection Agency should be able to address concerns laid out in three of the bills — specifically coal ash pollution and lead in schools. As for the rest, he said there are some duplicate bills working their way through the Senate and others can wait. "Anything that was extremely important we'll do from the Senate. There was nothing that urgent in the House. So that's why we're going to wait, but the EPA stuff we'll watch closely and make sure that they get their work done," Gutwein said.

### **Ending gun permits would cost \$3.5M**

Indiana legislators would face coming up with \$3.5 million a year for local police agencies if they repeal the state law requiring a permit to carry a handgun in public ([AP](#)). An Indiana House committee heard testimony Wednesday on a bill that would allow any resident to carry a handgun unless for reasons including previous felony convictions, being under a restraining order or having dangerous mental illnesses. Supporters of the bill argue that requiring gun permits undermine Second Amendment protections and that violent criminals don't obey the law. Bill sponsor Republican Rep. Ben Smaltz of Auburn said he expected the Legislature would dedicate the \$3.5 million in permit applications fees that police and sheriff departments now collect and spend on equipment and training. Indiana State Police Superintendent Doug Carter and leaders of the state police chiefs association and Indiana Fraternal Order of Police spoke against the proposal, saying it would eliminate a valuable screening tool identifying those who shouldn't possess handguns. Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb was noncommittal when asked Wednesday about the proposal that has failed during previous years in the Legislature. "I'll be watching it and paying close attention to what does or does not come to my desk and I'll be very clear when I start to see the bill's language become a bit clearer as well," Holcomb said. The committee could vote next week on whether to advance the proposal to the full House.

### **Conflict of interest surrounds several bills**

An Indiana lawmaker who builds homes is the sole author on a bill to ban community architecture design requirements, a proposal that could save him and others in his profession thousands of dollars. Ethics experts say Rep. Doug Miller's involvement in the bill is inappropriate, because of his ownership of Elkhart-based development company Tailor Made Homes and his role on the board of directors for the National Association of Homebuilders (Lange, [IndyStar](#)). He also chairs the House committee that passed the legislation, giving him control of that process. The Elkhart Republican says his goal with House Bill 1114 is to increase affordable housing options for Hoosiers and push back on local overreach. Miller said simply moving the garage door or changing the material on the exterior of the house can generate savings of \$15,000. Leaders in Indiana's cities and towns say the bill would hamper their ability to negotiate quality products and lead to so-called vinyl villages and the mass production of identical — and potentially unsafe — homes, making it challenging to sustain quality of place. "Why not have somebody else bring it forward, if it's that significant of an issue?" asked Abe Schwab, a professor of ethics at Purdue University Fort Wayne. House Speaker Todd Huston, a fellow Republican, said he did not see an issue with Miller taking the lead on the issue. He offered a common refrain used by lawmakers with potential conflicts of interest, saying that the General Assembly is a part-time job. "I think people in the legislative body bring their level of expertise and the experiences they've had," Huston said. "Rep. Miller is using his unique experiences in that field to bring forward legislation that doesn't directly impact Rep. Miller, but the industry and frankly, communities as a whole. This is one where he's just bringing his little expertise."

### **Bill would allow alcohol at Lake Michigan**

State lawmakers appear poised to support Gary's efforts toward revitalizing its lakefront by granting the city six additional alcohol sales permits for to-be-developed lakefront restaurants (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). The House Public Policy Committee unanimously agreed Wednesday to allow Gary, and any eligible city located on Lake Michigan, to obtain additional alcohol sales permits for lake-adjacent developments under a program originally created to boost business and tourism in Whiting. State Rep. Earl Harris Jr., D-East Chicago, said if House Bill 1090 becomes law it will help make the Gary lakefront a bigger draw for both city residents and visitors from outside of Gary.

### **Bill would prevent jail for misdemeanors**

An Indianapolis lawmaker thinks Hoosiers shouldn't get arrested and booked in jail for non-violent crimes such as shoplifting or possessing small amounts of marijuana ([IndyStar](#)). That lawmaker is Rep. Cherrish Pryor, D-Indianapolis, and she's hoping her stance will become Indiana law. Pryor is the author behind House Bill 1023, which would require law enforcement officers

to issue court summonses to people who have committed non-violent misdemeanors instead of arresting them.

### Bill targets teacher union fees

Indiana teachers could see extra steps to pay union dues in the future if a bill headed to the Senate floor succeeds. Testimony weeks ago sparked lengthy debate about the contentious measure (Hicks, [Indiana Public Media](#)). The bill would make teachers sign forms each summer allowing their union to automatically deduct dues from paychecks. The forms would include bold-font language informing them of their rights to not join a union and if teachers forget to renew, their membership would lapse. Senators voting for the measure said it would help teachers make "informed decisions" about their dues and membership. Testimony from anti-union groups suggested teachers could forget about the automatic paycheck deductions and end up paying them against their will. Indiana State Teachers Association President Keith Gambill said it's trying to solve a nonexistent problem and will only direct more funding away from teaching supplies. "Staff time that's going to have to be devoted from school districts is staff time off of other work that would've been assigned," he said. "That money ends up coming out of the classroom and it's hurting kids."

### Bill increasing riot penalties to full Senate

A bill that would increase the penalties for rioting and obstructing traffic if either leads to serious injury or causes serious property damage passed out of committee this week and will be considered by the full Indiana Senate (Blake, [WRTV](#)). Under current Indiana law, rioting is a misdemeanor. The proposal from State Sen. Michael Young, R-Indianapolis, would raise it to a felony. "Amid protests that turned to violent riots last summer in Indianapolis, two Hoosiers were tragically and senselessly killed the evening of May 30, whether it was from the actions of rioters or because law enforcement had to focus their efforts on the rioters," Young said. "It was disappointing and frustrat-

ing to me and many others to see our beautiful capital city destroyed that night."

### Indiana passes 12,000 COVID deaths

Indiana has surpassed 12,000 coronavirus-related deaths after the state's three deadliest months during the pandemic. The state Department of Health on Wednesday added 52 recent coronavirus deaths to the statewide total, pushing it to 12,001 fatalities including both confirmed and presumed COVID-19 infections ([AP](#)). Indiana's rates of new COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths have declined steeply since peaking in early December, but the state still recorded more than 1,900 coronavirus deaths during January. That followed more than 9,000 coronavirus deaths last year that contributed to a one-year jump of 16% in statewide mortality. State health officials, meanwhile, have lowered the risk level for COVID-19 spread in more counties. The state Department of Health's weekly tracking map updated Wednesday labels only Switzerland County in far southeastern Indiana in the highest-risk red category. That is down from 73 of the 92 counties in that category four weeks ago. This week's map lists 40 counties in the next-riskiest orange category.

### State identifies next vaccine groups

The state's coronavirus numbers are decreasing — an encouraging sign for Hoosiers and hospitals (CBS4). When it comes to vaccines, the state said it will soon open vaccinations to Hoosiers age 60 and older once enough vaccine is available. Then the state will offer vaccines to Hoosiers age 50-59 and Hoosiers younger than 50 with certain co-morbidities. Those health conditions include: People on dialysis; People with Down syndrome; Solid organ transplant recipients; Sickle cell anemia; People actively in cancer treatment or who have received cancer treatment in the last three months. ❖



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# Two bills target rural neighbors of CAFOs

By ANNE LAKER

INDIANAPOLIS – Once upon a time, individual property rights were the bedrock of the American fairy tale, the manifest destiny dream that shaped our DNA. Like the right to bear arms, controlling your own property was sacred and inalienable, especially in the GOP pantheon.



What's changed? A lot. It's strange that Republicans have managed to attract voters of any kind with their new sacred principle, industrial rights above all.

If you've ever taken the back roads of, say, Dubois or Newton counties, you've probably smelled, if not seen, a confined animal feeding operation (CAFO). These are the sprawling complexes that churn out Indiana's 20.5 million

turkeys, 4.2 million hogs and 187,000 dairy cows. These are the mechanized factories that make Indiana first in the nation in commercial duck production, second in total eggs produced, fourth in turkeys raised, and fifth in hog production – as the Indiana Department of Agriculture claims with pride.

But living near a CAFO kills any romance of rural life. Forget the golden sun rays, red barns and freedom from urban tyranny. Prepare for a stench that will wreck your property values in no time flat. But now, legal battles and combative bills out of the General Assembly are making it practically impossible for individual families and even entire towns to co-exist with industrial animal producers.

**Twin bills, SB411** (from Sens. Jon Ford, R-Terre Haute and Scott Baldwin, R-Noblesville), and HB1380 (from Rep. Alan Morrison, R-Covington), place a formidable burden of proof on anyone claiming that a CAFO's operations is harming his/her property or quality of life. The bill says that if a CAFO has a permit, it's as good as a legal shield. While permits regulate manure management and water contamination – no doubt lightly, since this is Indiana – permits don't at all regulate odor, a.k.a. air quality standards. These two bills remove an entire category of claim, known as stigma damages, or stink objections.

Insert joke here: In Indiana, we don't just think our waste doesn't stink; we legislate it.

But the matters of the right to live vs. the right to farm are far from funny. Industrial rights don't just run roughshod over individuals. Another bill ensures that

towns can be punished for trying to exercise control over quality of place. HB1573, authored by Rep. Jeff Ellington (R-Orleans), would prohibit local governments from using their zoning and planning authority to ban factory farms and logging operations from being built too near municipal boundaries. Fare thee well, home rule. Hello, industrial rights.

Much of the rancor here comes from a long-simmering Indiana court case that made it to the doorstep of the U.S. Supreme Court. A Hendricks County couple living next to a CAFO were deemed to have no just claim against the damage the CAFO was doing to their health – only since the couple chose to begin using their own land as residential rather than agricultural. Individual property rights?

Shrug.

This is because Indiana already has one of the stiffest "right to farm acts" (RTFA) in the nation. Other states apparently call often to find out how this act passed constitutional muster in the first place, and how they can shove it through their legislatures.

**The RTFA says: As long** as a CAFO complies with regulatory requirements, the decision to build a CAFO on vacant cropland next to existing homes cannot be considered negligent conduct under the RTFA, no matter how unreasonable, extreme, and knowingly harmful. Amending the Right to Farm Act so that it doesn't strip property rights is the obvious solution. As it stands, there are no limits to the number of animals or amount of waste CAFOs can generate, and they're allowed to be as close as 100 feet from churches and schools regardless of the amount of waste and emissions they pump out.

There is one lonely pro-property rights bill in the IGA meant to counteract the avalanche of industrial rights bills. Rep. Thomas Saunders (R-Lewisville) has joined Rep. Sue Errington (D-Muncie) in co-authoring HB1472. It says that a CAFO owner can be sued for failing to use reasonable care in siting, building or operating a CAFO.

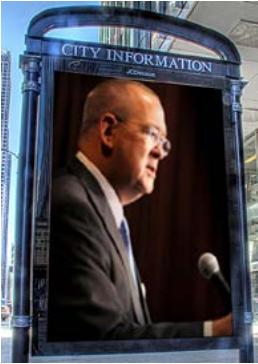
The push for industrial rights at the Indiana Statehouse begs the questions: Is the only motivation for being a lawmaker the opportunity to advantage Big Ag in exchange for campaign cash? How hard, and how risky, would it really be to legislate a fair balance between the thriving of Indiana's major industries and the rights of citizen property owners to live in peace? And when will voters awaken? ❖

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

# Stop restricting the growth of Indianapolis

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – The 2021 state legislative session is remarkable for a series of bills that limit the existing power of Indianapolis city government. One of these would remove the control of the police department from the elected mayor and city council. Another removes the city’s legal authority to provide bus rapid transit, and yet another would prevent the city from regulating the placement of 5G wireless devices. The state legislature also appears poised to override Gov. Holcomb’s veto of a city ordinance that provided extra protections for tenants.



These are unusual issues for a state legislature to become involved in, but there’s more. One bill would prevent Indianapolis, or any other city, from changing its name. To be fair, that bill might be targeted at Russiaville, Toad Hop or Slab Town, not Indianapolis. Another would limit the powers of Indianapolis to undertake land-use authority within its city limits. A casual observer might conclude that some members of the General Assembly have abandoned federalism, that mainstay of conservative thought for the past 244 years. That couldn’t possibly be the explanation, though; it must be something else.

This flurry of legislation aimed at the heart of Indiana’s largest municipal government seems to signal that something unseemly is happening in Indianapolis. It implies that Indy is failing at something important, something at which the rest of Indiana is successful. Maybe, Indianapolis has a problem that is keeping it from attracting people, jobs or economic activity like the rest of the state. Surely that is the case? It must be that Indianapolis and the Indy metro region are doing so much worse than the rest of the state, that lawmakers feel compelled to intervene. Let’s see what the data says about that.

**First, it is important to define** the geographies. There is the City of Indianapolis proper, which is essentially Marion County. Then, there is the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area, which also consists of the surrounding counties. The legislation noted above would affect both the City of Indianapolis and the surrounding metropolitan area that depends upon the success of the city.

From 2000 to 2019, Indiana’s population grew by 639,000 persons. Within the Indianapolis metropolitan area, population grew by 543,000. So far this century, a full 85% of the state’s population growth happened within the Indianapolis metro area. Outside of the Indy metro, the state had just 96,000 new residents. By comparison, Marion County alone saw 104,000 new residents over the

same time period.

Since 2000, the Indy metro area has grown by 35%, the City of Indianapolis by 12%, and the whole rest of the state by 2.1%. The City of Indianapolis saw more population growth this century than the 80 non-Indy metro counties combined. So, whatever concern about crime, zoning or building design residents have about Indy, they are worse everywhere else. Surely there is something else troubling the General Assembly for them to take such a keen interest in restricting Indianapolis government. What about jobs?

**Since 2000, the** Indianapolis metro region has added some 154,000 jobs. Of those jobs, the City of Indianapolis can account for 18,000 new jobs over the same time period. Here’s the rub; over the same time period, all the rest of Indiana lost a whopping 151,000 jobs. So far in this century, the Indianapolis region actually absorbed more than 100% of all the new jobs created in Indiana. So, if businesses have a problem with the way the Indy region is run, the problem is far, far, far worse in the other 80 counties.

Likewise, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Statistical Area has absorbed 65% of all the Gross Domestic Product growth this century. So far in the 21st Century, the City of Indianapolis alone received one out of every four new dollars of economic activity created statewide. Today, a worker in the City of Indianapolis produces \$179 worth of goods and services for every \$100 produced by a worker outside the Indy region.

The real shocker is that each year residents of Marion County send, on net, a bit more than \$500 per person in tax revenues to residents of the rest of the state. All told, 20 Hoosier counties pay more taxes to the state than they receive in tax revenues from the state. Five of those are in the Indianapolis metro area. So, just to summarize it clearly, Indianapolis, and the Indianapolis region as a whole, are growing leaps and bounds faster than the rest of the state. At the same time, they bear a greater state tax burden, of which a significant share is sent to other counties. They get far less back in tax dollars than they spend.

This realization ought to prompt a bit of circumspection among Indiana’s lawmakers. It stands to reason that because Indianapolis is outperforming the state on growth in population, jobs, GDP and worker productivity, the remainder of the state ought to be taking notes. Instead, lawmakers are throwing roadblocks in front of this, and other cities. A modicum of wisdom would incline legislation toward more, rather than less, local autonomy.

**Governing is hard work,** and for serious people. One way to make mockery of the seriousness of those tasks is legislation that removes rental rules from city council, prohibits municipal governments from land use planning or, or keeps the good people of Mudssock or Gnaw Bone from changing their town’s name.

Households and businesses are voting with their feet. The City of Indianapolis is growing five times faster



than the 80 non-Indy metro counties combined. For whatever flaws the city and region might have, the rest of Indiana would be better off economically if it were more like Indianapolis.

**The General Assembly** should permit every one of our municipal governments more freedom to mimic the success of Indianapolis. And, if any member of the legislature still wants to decide how many two-way streets a city should have, to run a police force, or dictate how tall 5G

towers must be, there is a quick and easy way to do so. Run for mayor. ❖

**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.**

## Death in the swamps

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – “It’s cold out here,” Sorethroat complains. “Why are we under the east stairs of the Capitol building?”

“Because I can’t go into the Statehouse as casually as I’d like since the legislative gators started their security checks,” I tell him.

“Well, what do you want to talk about? Be quick!” he shivers with the cold.

“We have several good folks from both parties in the General Assembly, yet when one senator proposes a cockeyed bill preventing Indianapolis and other cities from ever changing their names, the Senate approves it 36 to 11. Why?” I ask.

“Oh, that’s just Jack. Grandstanding. He’s stirring up some bluster about Native Americans objecting to derogatory names beyond sports teams,” Sorethroat says, taking another drag on his mini-cigar.

“Don’t take that bill seriously,” he says. “Senators know it’s a joke and the members are just having a little fun. They know the bill dies in the House or in a conference committee.” He flicks off a bit of cigar ash to demonstrate the insignificance of the issue.

“What about the serious matter of redistricting?” I ask.

“**Dead,**” he says. “You don’t think the Reds will let the Blues have any chance of gaining seats in the Legislature or Congress? Indiana’s gerrymandering is so good that 11 of the 25 Senate seats up for election in 2020 were uncontested by one or the other major parties. In the House, 41 of 100 seats were uncontested.”

“That a tragedy for democracy,” I moan.

“Yeah,” he agrees, “but these guys n’ gals can’t be persuaded to change their minds on anything. Gun safety? Never! Local governments having a say on issues concerning the big utilities, like the power or phone companies? Forget it! Wetland and waterways protection plus environ-

mental improvement? Not unless the Feds insist. The same for worker safety.”

Sorethroat’s breath is freezing fog as he says, “The status quo is the way to go, except when there’s a chance for legislators to take power from the locals or from the governor. Indiana’s one of 23 states where the legislature can readily override a governor’s veto. Seven of these states are Blue, 16 Red. You think COVID is a pandemic? Think about gerrymandering.”

**I’m getting hot under** the collar despite the cold. “And Hoosiers put up with this for years on end?” Am I asking or decrying?

“Most do,” he says. “Remember, there are Hoosiers who sincerely believe COVID is a hoax.”

“Death is no hoax,” I insist. “CDC data for 2020 show 10,780 “excess” deaths in Indiana over and above the total number expected from past experience with all other causes. The State Dept. of Health has the COVID total through Feb. 3, 2021, as 11,231. They’re consistent.”

“Well, aren’t both part of the conspiracy to fund Big Pharma?” he says, shivering as he goes back indoors.


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**Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at [mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com](mailto:mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com). Follow his views and those of John Guy on “Who Gets What?” wherever podcasts are available or at [mortonjohn.libsyn.com](http://mortonjohn.libsyn.com).**



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

**James Briggs, IndyStar:** Mike Pence could have died last week. We need to be explicit about that, far more explicit than we've been so far, or we risk failing to understand the gravity of the events that unfolded inside the Capitol building and what they mean for our future. It's not that no one is talking about the danger Pence faced — many people are — but we have not collectively paused long enough to process the stakes: A breakdown in our political system nearly led to the execution of the sitting vice president. All because President Donald Trump's ego did not permit him to concede an election that he lost to Democrat Joe Biden. That is not hyperbole. Trump spent weeks preparing his supporters for a final showdown over his attempt to remain in office under the pretense of a stolen election. After failing to make his voter fraud case in court, Trump fixated on the vice president's obscure role in certifying the election results as the solution to his problem. Trump and others insisted Pence had the power to reject votes from states that supported Biden. When the day came, Pence released a long statement that doubled as a history lesson. Pence explained that his role was "largely ceremonial" and that he lacked "unilateral authority to determine which electoral votes should be counted and which should not." Trump was not satisfied. As his supporters swarmed the Capitol building, Trump gave them a target. The president tweeted: "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!" Pence was presiding over the Senate moments before the mob reached the chamber.

Rioters shouted for him by name — they yelled, "Where's Mike Pence" and "Hang Mike Pence," a phrase that trended on Twitter, according to multiple news reports — and all available evidence suggests they had the violent impulse and wherewithal to attack him if he hadn't escaped. Vice President Mike Pence certified Joe Biden and Kamala Harris' victory after violence erupted at the U.S. Capitol. U.S. Rep. Larry Bucshon, a Trump-supporting Republican, issued a statement condemning the president's "harsh unfounded criticism of my friend Vice President Mike Pence." Here's more of Bucshon's account of what led to the violence: "This breach was an attempt to force the Congress to overturn an election for which the rioters did not like the result. An insurrection against the Federal Government. Unfortunately, earlier in the day President Trump, in a speech on the National Mall, incited the crowd to do just that. President Trump said, 'We are going to the Capitol' to 'try and give them the pride and boldness that they need to take back our country.' I cannot condone this dangerous rhetoric by the President. Words have meaning and many of the President's supporters took him literally, resulting in the attempted insurrection." It is deplorable enough that Trump demanded an illegitimate act of loyalty from his vice president. It is pure evil that, once spurned,

Trump sicced his frenzied supporters on Pence and everyone else in the Capitol with no regard for their safety. ❖



**Nate Feltman, IBJ:** Republicans in Indiana's Legislature have filed three bills aimed at taking control of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department away from Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett. The most extreme is Senate Bill 168, filed by Sen. Jack Sandlin, which calls for the establishment of a five-member board to oversee IMPD. Four members would be appointed by the governor and one by the mayor. The efforts by Republican legislators to assert more control

over Indianapolis and IMPD stem from the riots and loss of life last summer, as well as the 40% increase in homicides in Indy last year. There were 215 murders in Indy last year—an all-time high. In addition, there is frustration with the newly created General Orders Board that gives civilians control over IMPD policies, a move opposed by the police union. The growing frustration with the rise of crime and the deterioration of our downtown is understandable. Decades of work have gone into the development and growth of downtown. The combination of the riots and the pandemic have brought downtown to the brink. Add to the mix a lack of leadership out of the City-County Building, and the ground has been laid for the Republican supermajority in the Statehouse to assert itself in the affairs of our capital city. The irony of this effort is that Republicans typically are in favor of "home rule" policies and laws, which allow a community to tailor its local government to meet local needs. The Republican Party I know wants to narrow government interference in residents' lives and allow local government to handle issues that are local in nature, such as crime. How is it that the same Republican Party that has filed bills to rein in the governor's emergency powers (as a result of his pandemic executive orders) now wants to grant the governor authority over policing in Indianapolis? If Sandlin's bill becomes law, you might see the mayor dancing in the streets, since local policing would become the province of an unaccountable state board. ❖

**John Kass, Chicago Tribune:** In their second impeachment of the man who is now no longer president, the Democrats fixed Donald Trump's orange political head upon their rattle. They waved it before a deeply divided nation and pronounced him a demon. On one level, it reminds me of the Native American sorcerer in the movie "Black Robe," who castigates his rival as a michimindo, a demon. On another, it fills me with foreboding. Not for Trump. I don't care about Trump or the posturing of Republicans or Democrats. But I do care about our republic. And I see terrible pain ahead of us. As Democrats shake the orange rattle, emotions and outrage are re-stoked over the disgusting events of Jan. 6 and the deadly attack on the Capitol by several hundred Trump voters, egged on by Trump himself, filled as he was with his absurd fantasies of a stolen election. ❖

## Impeachment video provides narrative

WASHINGTON — Chilling security video of last month's deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, including of rioters searching menacingly for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence, has become a key exhibit in Donald Trump's impeachment trial as lawmakers prosecuting the case wrap up their opening arguments for why Trump should be convicted of inciting the siege (AP). The House will continue with its case Thursday, with Trump's lawyers set to launch their defense by week's end. The footage shown at trial, much of it never before seen, has included video of the mob smashing into the building, distraught members of Congress receiving comfort, rioters engaging in hand-to-hand combat with police and audio of Capitol police officers pleading for back-up. It underscored how dangerously close the rioters came to the nation's leaders, shifting the focus of the trial from an academic debate about the Constitution to a raw retelling of the Jan. 6 assault. Videos of the siege have been circulating since the day of the riot, but the graphic compilation shown to senators Wednesday amounted to a more complete narrative, a moment-by-moment retelling of one of the nation's most alarming days. The footage included rioters roaming the halls chanting "Hang Mike Pence," some equipped with combat gear. Outside, the mob had set up a makeshift gallows. And in one wrenching moment, police were shown shooting and killing a San Diego woman, Ashli Babbitt, as the mob tried to break through doors near the House Chamber.

## Georgia prosecutor opens case v. Trump

ATLANTA (AP) — A Georgia prosecutor said Wednesday that she has opened a criminal investigation

into "attempts to influence" last year's general election, including a call in which President Donald Trump asked a top official to find enough votes to overturn Joe Biden's victory in the state (AP). In a Jan. 2 telephone conversation with Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, Trump repeatedly argued that Raffensperger could change the certified results of the presidential election, an assertion the secretary of state firmly rejected.



"All I want to do is this. I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have," Trump said. "Because we won the state." Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, a Democrat elected to the job in November, did not specifically mention Trump in the letters she sent to state officials Wednesday announcing her investigation. But the former president has been under intense criticism for the call.

## Indy educators seek ILearn suspension

INDIANAPOLIS — Leaders at Marion County schools are asking the state of Indiana to cancel testing requirements for 2021 and hold districts harmless for the year (McKinney, WRTV). Superintendents from school districts across the county sent a letter to Indiana Secretary of Education Katie Jenner Wednesday, saying the burden from COVID-19 is already too much for students. The superintendents say testing takes about 20 days out of the year, and teachers need the instructional time back. "The 20 instructional day testing window takes precious instruction time away to address the COVID-19 learning loss," the letter states. They also say students undergoing COVID-19 quarantining would unfairly penalize the schools. "Families should not have to choose between their personal health concerns and state testing," they said. "Parents are indicating that they will not send their students to schools in order to test.

## Federal deficit up 89% in January

WASHINGTON — The U.S. government's budget deficit hit \$735.7 billion through the first four months of the budget year — an all-time high for the period — as a pandemic-induced recession cut into tax revenues while spending on COVID-19 relief measures sent outlays soaring (AP). The Treasury Department reported Wednesday that the deficit so far for the budget year that began Oct. 1 is 89% higher than the \$389.2 billion deficit run up in the same period a year ago. Last year's deficit through January had not yet been impacted by the pandemic, which began hitting the U.S. in February.

## Kroger to offer vaccines today

INDIANAPOLIS — Kroger will begin offering the COVID-19 vaccine to eligible Hoosiers beginning today at pharmacies across Indiana (WTHR-TV). The change comes after the state received more Moderna vaccine supplies, allowing expanded availability. Kroger plans to offer it at all stores with a pharmacy. There is no out-of-pocket cost to get it, but insurance information will be taken to help cover the costs of distribution, storage and administering the vaccine.

## COVID cases begin to plummet

WASHINGTON — New coronavirus cases continued their sharp decline over the past week — progress that could help the U.S. find its way out of the pandemic faster and more safely, if it keeps up (Axios). An average of 108,000 Americans were diagnosed with COVID-19 infections each day over the past week. That's a 24% decline from the week before. Hospitalizations were also down last week, by about 8%, and deaths fell by 3%. The virus is still killing an average of roughly 3,000 Americans per day.