

Indiana's 2 centuries of racial tension

State's role in slavery, abolition, KKK & civil rights is complicated

By **TREVOR FOUGHTY**

INDIANAPOLIS – At the conclusion of the Civil War, Congressman Daniel W. Voorhees gave a speech in which he declared that the most important question of the day was, "Shall the White man maintain his supremacy?"



Voorhees hoped the answer would be in the affirmative, but these were not the words of a bitter Confederate, or secret Klansman, or fringe lunatic; they were the words of a mainstream Hoosier politician, who in the course of his career would serve three years as the U.S. district attorney for Indiana, nine



years as a member of the U.S. House from Indiana, and nearly 20 years as Indiana's U.S. senator.

The words themselves are striking, primarily because the concept of White supremacy is appealed to so unambiguously. Upon hearing that phrase, modern audiences likely imagine skin-headed Neo-Nazis, or a mass of

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At the crossover point

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Ensnared in two overwhelming super majorities, General Assembly Republicans began this pandemic biennial session with, perhaps, a feeling of invulnerability.



As the mid-way point of the session passed this week, some of the national trends on education and race could be poised to play a role before sine die.

On the education front, when the House passed its version of the biennial budget on Monday, none of Gov. Eric Holcomb's Teacher Pay Commission recommendations calling for a \$600 million infusion were



“Where we were a month ago to where we are today has been, and I don't use that word loosely - remarkable.”

- Gov. Eric Holcomb, who observed the state's COVID-19 positivity rate was 4.1% on Wednesday, down from 8.4% a month ago.



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Jack E. Howey
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 1926-2019



State Reps. John Jenkins and Peggy Mayfield debate HB1577, or the abortion reversal bill. Jenkins voted against the measure.

included. Republicans could be poking a sleeping bear on that front, as well as not prioritizing teacher vaccination.

When U.S. Census data arrives late this summer or fall, perhaps the insurance policy will be new districts that will be designed to protect at least their majorities. Perhaps the pervading sense is that while the ISTA can energize one-day Red for Ed rallies once or twice a year, the Democratic party is so weak and brittle that it cannot provide the muscle in either chamber or the next election to impact policy.

Gov. Holcomb would be wise to steer what could be funds for a surplus (voters won't mind if a \$2.9 billion surplus becomes \$2.7 billion) into a teacher pay investment, lest the issue fester in the emerging purple suburban districts in 2022 and 2024.

Last week, there was a rare racial flareup between State Reps. Sean Eberhart and Vanessa Summers that will test the relatively new leadership of House Speaker Todd Huston and Senate President Pro Tem Rod Bray. We had not witnessed this kind of provocation in recent memory, and it had Democrats calling for diversity training.

Huston said he was "embarrassed" by the incident that began when Democrat State Rep. Vernon Smith declared the U.S. to be a "racist nation" and ended with catcalls and a

hallway confrontation between State Reps. Summers and Eberhart.

State Rep. Robin Shackelford explained, "We can't tell who all is racist over there. We hear some of the comments." Huston responded, telling the IndyStar, "It's not my nature to be heavy-handed in enforcement, but, make no mistake, going forward that will be the case."

"I'm committed today to increase focus on maintaining decorum, civility and professionalism in this institution," Huston said. House Democratic Leader Phil GiaQuinta added, "Reach out today or tomorrow and introduce yourself to someone on the other side of the aisle that you haven't met yet. Give them a fist bump or an elbow bump, and pledge to do your best to find common ground on legislation."

This played out over a national fault line that was exposed with the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis last spring, which incited civil unrest that reached Indianapolis and Fort Wayne. Republicans, who are grappling with race issues nationally, responded with legislation that increased penalties for those convicted of rioting.

Also in a spate of bills, Republican legislators assumed their trending role as Indiana's "Super City Council" with legislation that would have moved authority over IMPD to

the state, while other bills encroached on municipal zoning and rental laws.

When 60 business and industry leaders complained to President Bray earlier this month, the IMPD bill was quickly referred to a summer study committee. Mark Fisher, chief policy officer for Indy Chamber, told IBJ that business leaders would like the state to partner with local officials to find solutions to those issues. But attacking local control would only slow the city's recovery and growth, he said.

"I appreciate the concern that the Legislature has about the future of Indianapolis," Fisher said. "But these challenges did not arise overnight, and they're certainly not going to be solved overnight."

Josh Owens, prospective Democrat gubernatorial candidate, added via tweet, "The most basic economic principle is opportunity cost – what you give up to get something. Imagine what Indianapolis could be achieving if it didn't have to spend its time arguing with the IN legislature to stop reversing local decisions. This impacts everyone more than we see."

Ball State University economist Michael Hicks' column observed in the Feb. 11 edition of *Howey Politics Indiana*, "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%." Hicks also noted the Indy Metro Region accounted for 100% of new jobs, and 65% of Indiana's GDP growth this century.

"The City of Indianapolis saw more population growth this century than the 80 non-Indy metro counties combined," Hicks

explained. "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."

The conservative wish list is in play, as the House overwhelmingly passed a bill that would end gun registration despite opposition from the Indiana FOP and ISP Supt. Doug Carter. Another bill would prevent Hoosier investments in China, even if it cost state pension funds, though it appears to be dead at the crossover.

And the House also voted 67-29 in favor of a bill that would require doctors to tell patients about a disputed treatment to stop a drug-induced abortion after a woman has taken the first of two pills for the procedure. According to the AP, medical groups say the "reversal" process is not backed up by science and that there is little information about the procedure's safety. "You make abortion more unthinkable because you are providing the mother with additional information and alternatives to abortion," said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Peggy Mayfield, R-Martinsville.

Another key area of contention is the governor's

action via executive order in dealing with the pandemic. Several bills would have the General Assembly convene in special session after the original 30-day executive order lending its imprimatur. Other bills would prevent a future governor from shutting down businesses or church services. Holcomb questioned the "constitutionality" of these pending bills.

On Tuesday, the Senate passed SB407 by a 38-8 margin. It would cap a governor's emergency order at 60 days. "The bill is not a constitutional attack on the constitutional powers of the governor," Glick told the IBJ. "This bill allows the General Assembly to reassert its constitutional role in representation of the businesses and citizens throughout the state whose livelihoods were impacted by repeated disaster emergency orders, which closed them down for extended periods of time with no recourse."

The other big gubernatorial reform bill is HB1123 which essentially would allow a General Assembly "emergency session" at any time during a statewide crisis.

On Wednesday, Holcomb's executive order outlining pandemic-related capacity restrictions based on a county-by-county system will continue through March, even as COVID-19 conditions continue to improve around the state. The order, which is set to expire Sunday, will be extended 30 days. In addition, the state's public health emergency order, set to expire Monday, will also be extended 30 days.

Holcomb said that he has been "in constant contact" with legislative leadership and members. "We've got to find the sweet spot," Holcomb said, "but still have the ability to adjust. We have to make sure anything we do is constitutional."

Gov. Holcomb will be in the best position to shape the end game this April. There will, of course, be one more revenue forecast. I'm hearing that the controversial HB1005 that expands the number of school vouchers could be folded into HB1001, the biennial budget bill.

If racial confrontations continue to simmer, Holcomb could step in, like he did last August when he said the state was at an "inflection point" on race. "We're also facing another kind of virus that's equally voracious, and it's in turn forcing us to a reckoning as a state and nation, one that's built on 'equality for all.' I'm talking about cases of racism – sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle – that have led to inequity and exclusion, that have plagued our country throughout our storied history."

Holcomb will also grapple with the pandemic-generated gubernatorial authority issues during the home-stretch. Both HB1123 and SB407 passed the chambers by overwhelming majorities.

He'll have to be at his rhetorical best on this issue, lest he face another veto override and a constitutionality verdict from the courts. ❖

1,031 bills & joint resolutions were introduced

316 move on to the 2nd half of session

Here's the breakdown

	Introduced	Survived	Survival rate
HBs	602	149	25%
HJR's	4	0	0%
SBs	410	167	41%
SJR's	15	0	0%

Racial Indiana, from page 1

white hoods marching under the cover of night with only their torches to illuminate the darkness. For many, it likely invokes the notion of vitriolic hatred that manifests itself in both verbal and physical violence.

But to Indiana audiences in 1865, such rhetoric wasn't just tolerated, it actually represented widely held beliefs at the time. While it's true that Indiana was admitted to the Union as a free state, was largely opposed to slavery, and was overwhelmingly supportive of the Union in the Civil War, this is a rather simplistic narrative of 19th Century race relations in Indiana. Such a narrative ignores the thread of White supremacy that is imbued throughout our state's history before, during, and after the Civil War. More importantly, it misses the fact that this bigotry has tended to manifest itself not through strident rhetoric and violence, but through relatively subtle words and actions – and often under the guise of routine public policy and discourse.

This can be illustrated with brief stories from three distinct eras of our state's political history: Our founding era, when the partisan battle lines in our first popular elections were drawn around the issue of slavery; the decade before the Civil War, when Indiana rewrote its constitution and included provisions explicitly pertaining to Blacks; and the 1920s, when the second wave of the Ku Klux Klan infamously amassed enough political power to control much of state government.

The Founding Era

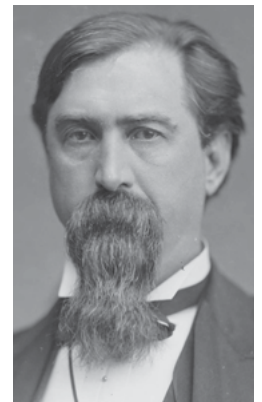
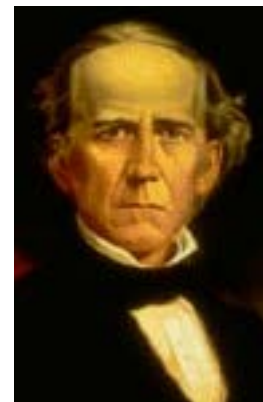
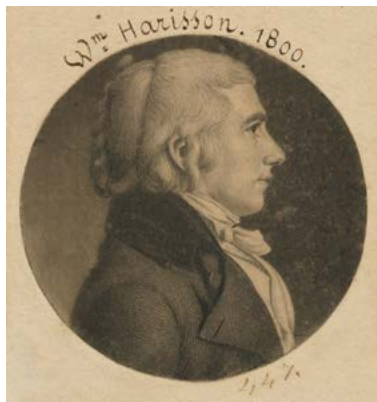
Under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, slavery was prohibited within the Northwest Territory. Many of the earliest settlers in the territory came from Virginia (especially the part of Virginia that became Kentucky), and they brought their legally owned slaves with them; those who were here before the ordinance were grandfathered in and allowed to keep their slaves.

These same prohibitions were extended to the Indiana Territory when it was carved out of the Northwest Territory in 1800. This was problematic for the territory's new governor, William Henry Harrison, who was a slave-owning Virginian who couldn't be grandfathered in upon his arrival at Vincennes.

One of Harrison's first acts as governor, then, was to petition Congress to suspend the slaveholding prohibition for 10 years; Congress refused, but Harrison was determined to keep his slaves. Because the Northwest Ordinance didn't allow citizens of the Indiana Territory to elect the members of the Territorial Legislature until the adult male population reached 5,000, Harrison had the power to appoint (and thus control) its members. He stacked it with

pro-slavery allies who passed the so-called "indenture law" which allowed for indentured servitude within the territory. Then Harrison and others simply established contracts with their slaves that bound them far beyond their life expectancy, thereby evading the federal slaveholding prohibition. These contracts could be bought and sold from others, meaning slaves were freely sold here, as well.

It would be nearly a decade before Hoosiers had a chance to elect their leadership, being granted the franchise by Congress in 1809. In the meantime, slavery nearly doubled here. Census data show the number of slaves in Indiana growing from 135 in 1800 to 237 in 1810; but as many indentured Blacks weren't technically considered slaves, it's likely that the number of "free" Blacks enumer-



Govs. Harrison and Wright and Sen. Voorhees.

ated in the census, which grew from 163 to 393, disguised just how many slaves there actually were.

That growth would help fuel the organization of anti-slavery and anti-Harrison candidates for the first popular elections held in Indiana. The "antis" were led by Dennis Pennington, who would be elected to the legislature and chosen as the territory's first (and, ultimately, only) speaker of the House; and Jonathan Jennings, who was elected to Congress that year and every year until statehood, when he was elected the state's first governor.

The first partisan lines in Indiana were thus drawn around the slavery issue, with Pennington and Jennings dealing a serious blow to Harrison at the ballot box. The newly elected Territorial Legislature was overwhelmingly behind Pennington, and they quickly repealed the indenture law. Harrison continuing to recruit pro-slavery candidates to oppose the anti-slavery candidates of Pennington and Jennings, and in this era before organized political parties, these factions represented the broad alternatives presented to voters.

By the time the first Indiana State Constitution was drafted, the antis clearly had the upper hand. Jennings served as the State Constitutional Convention president, and Pennington was one of the chief authors of Indiana's founding document, ensuring stronger anti-slavery language than was in the Northwest Ordinance. But being anti-slavery didn't mean the state was racially

tolerant; only White men were given the right to vote; early state leaders quickly adopted and enforced fugitive slave laws that made it a crime to assist Blacks who were still legally considered property; it was illegal for Blacks to testify in court; it was illegal for Whites to marry Blacks; and those Hoosiers who owned slaves prior to statehood were able to continue owning them into the 1830's.

The 1850s & the Run-Up to the Civil War

Over the ensuing decades, state politics began to focus elsewhere, primarily on internal improvements and other measures necessary to support a nascent state. But as mid-century national expansion drove slavery to become the most pressing federal policy discussion, Hoosiers were once again firmly in the anti-slavery camp – but they were no closer to serving as a paragon of racial tolerance.

As the national issue was peaking in 1851, just after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and just a few years prior to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, delegates met in Indianapolis to draft a new state constitution. Many of the delegates were concerned about the national slavery question, but they arrived at the Constitutional Convention more concerned about the number of free blacks moving into the state. As one delegate summed up the concerns, "We know that when we are overrun with them – as we most assuredly will be unless we adopt some stringent measures to prevent it – there will be commenced a war which will end only in extermination of one race or the other."

Ultimately, the delegates opted for the stringent measures to prevent it. In addition to a nearly unanimous vote against giving Black males the right to vote (only one delegate voted in support), they voted by a more than two-to-one margin in favor of what would become Article 13. That article's first section simply read, "No negro or mulatto shall come into or settle in the State, after the adoption of this Constitution."

In addition to explicitly prohibiting Blacks from settling anywhere in Indiana, Article 13 also prohibited Whites from entering into contracts with Blacks, and established fines for helping or encouraging Blacks to move into, or stay in, the state.

Had the story ended here, it would be a deeply embarrassing episode in which perhaps only the politicians could be scapegoated. But in an unusual move, the constitution's authors actually sent two referenda to the

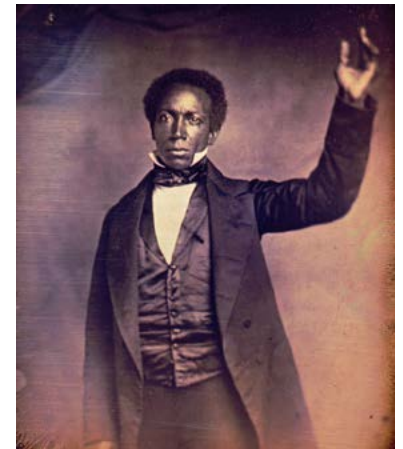
voters, one to ratify Article 13 on its own, and one to ratify the rest of the constitution.

The vote tally exposes just how widespread racial fears were among an otherwise anti-slavery citizenry. Article 13 had more support (84%) than the rest of the constitution (80%), and in only four counties did the opposition to Article 13 outweigh the support. This article would stand until the Indiana Supreme Court struck it down after the end of the Civil War.

It wasn't just keeping Blacks out of the state that was on the minds of public policymakers at the time; they also wanted those already here to leave. The first Indiana General Assembly to meet under the new constitution directed that the fines collected under Article 13 were to



The Roberts Settlement was founded by free Blacks in Hamilton County in 1835. It was one of the earliest, and longest-lasting, black settlements in Indiana. The site, near present-day Atlanta where the chapel still stands, was chosen because it was next to a Quaker settlement. While very few Hoosier Blacks went to Liberia, the Vigo County chapter of the American Colonization Society helped pay for local barber Edward Roye to move to Africa. Roye would become the fifth President of Liberia.



be sent to a colonization fund meant to defray the cost of sending resident Blacks to the relatively new colony of Liberia, in Africa. To underscore how strongly they felt about this, legislators also made a direct appropriation from the state to help kick-start the fund.

The notion of colonization was spearheaded by the American Colonization Society, which had founded Liberia and helped it gain independence in 1847. The Society had chapters across the country, including many county-level chapters in Indiana. They believed that Blacks would be better off in Africa than in the United States, where they could establish their own society apart from Whites. Among Hoosier supporters, it wasn't uncommon to hear the corollary idea that it would also make Whites better off as well. One staunch proponent of colonization was Joseph A. Wright, who served as governor from 1849 to 1857. In 1862 as one of Indiana's U.S. senators, Wright declared the goal for Indiana through colonization was to ensure, "as far as possible, a White population."

This is not to say these views were universal in Indiana. The large Quaker presence in the state (particularly

around Wayne County) meant there were several pockets of ardent abolitionists. Like Pennington and Jennings before them, their beliefs about the evils of slavery led them into political involvement. This involvement was likely at a higher rate than other denominations, because despite being a minority denomination, nearly 200 Quakers served in the state legislature throughout the 19th Century. But their beliefs also led them to go beyond simply opposing slavery, and they worked to display true tolerance and inclusivity toward Blacks.

As a result, Black settlements tended to pop up near Quaker settlements, and the Quakers may be more responsible than anyone for Indiana becoming such an important route on the Underground Railroad. Levi Coffin, among its most famous participants and a Quaker, earned the nickname "President of the Underground Railroad" and helped over 3,000 blacks find freedom. But while intolerant views expressed politically in this era may not have been universal, they were the prevailing views; the Quakers were more exception than rule.

1920s and the Second Wave of the Klan

These views didn't recede in the postwar period, either. While the slavery issue was settled and Blacks were granted the same rights as Whites under federal law, many towns in Indiana adopted sundown laws that prohibited Blacks from being out in public after sundown, or even from lodging overnight in private quarters. Many towns also established separate facilities for Blacks and Whites, resembling many parts of the South. But one aspect of the Reconstruction South did not come to Indiana at that time; the first wave of the Ku Klux Klan was almost entirely limited to the South. That would change with the resurgence of the Klan in 1920s, however.

The story of the Klan's influence at the Indiana Statehouse in that decade is a well-worn one. Many are familiar with the story of D.C. Stephenson, the Evansville-based Grand Dragon who kidnapped, raped, and murdered a state employee named Madge Oberholtzer. Once convicted of these crimes, Stephenson tried to get Gov. Edward Jackson to grant him a pardon. After Jackson refused, Stephenson exposed him and dozens of other state officials and legislators as Klan members, detailing to state newspapers the corruption and bribes they had been involved with. It ended many political careers, but also helped abruptly end the second wave of the Klan when tens of thousands of members fled the organization for fear of association. The Klan would later see a smaller third wave rise in the 1960s in response to the civil rights movement, but it was not as prevalent in Indiana as it was in the South.

The Stephenson story, replete with drama and

political intrigue, masks some important points. First and foremost is that while all three waves of the Klan were ostensibly the same organization and all were based on the core belief of the supremacy of the White race, they were highly distinct in some important ways. The first Klan was made up of former Confederate soldiers who were opposing Reconstruction, broadly, and giving any rights to Blacks, specifically. In this way, the third wave that fought the civil rights movement was its direct successor. The rhetoric of these waves was centered around the language of White supremacy and Black inferiority, their tactics were based on intimidation and threats (often carried out) of violence, and their iconography focused on the Confederate flag.

The second wave, by contrast, was less overt in its use of racially-charged rhetoric. Its tactics more resembled a social club focused on community service than a militaristic hate group, and very importantly, its iconography focused on the American, not the Confederate, flag.

Stephenson became one of the most important figures nationally because he essentially helped rebrand the Klan to make it relevant to the era. That rebranding worked better in Indiana than just about anywhere.



Indiana had perhaps the largest Klan membership in the country, with most estimates placing about 25% of non-immigrant white Hoosier males – nearly 300,000 – on the Klan membership rolls, to say nothing of the thousands of white females who participated in auxiliary activities. Stephenson's marketing efforts worked not just here, but all across the Midwest, where he was quickly placed in charge of recruiting for seven states that saw results mirroring those in Indiana.

As American society was rapidly changing – urbanization was accelerating and electricity, automobiles, and movies were relatively new innovations being quickly adopted – and Stephenson tapped into the growing angst that American society was also rapidly crumbling as it moved away from the Protestant Christian values it was founded on. This was supposedly evidenced by the bootleggers and speakeasies that flouted Prohibition, by the racy dancing that took place in jazz clubs, and the impure movies being churned out by a burgeoning Hollywood. If idle hands are the devil’s workshop, then these were the vices that made Americans idle.

The Klan was attractive to many because it appealed in patriotic terms to Protestants who thought the world was going to hell in a handbasket. They tried to restore American exceptionalism by participating in raids that shut down the speakeasies and the jazz clubs; by getting local cinemas to ban certain movies; by organizing politically to enact stricter prohibition laws or to fund monuments to American military strength such as the World War Memorial in Indianapolis; and by generally making America more Christian. In short, Stephenson helped wage the first modern culture war, and so persuasive was this message that many ministers extolled the Klan’s virtues from the pulpit.

Given this backdrop, it’s not hard to imagine how this second Klan wave was able to link back to the group’s core ideas. As preeminent Indiana historian James Madison notes, “The rallying cry for many patriots was 100% Americanism. White, Protestant Americans were true Americans standing against a dangerous surge of racial and ethnic pluralism.” Catholics, with their deference to the Pope in Rome – an undemocratic and almost monarchical figure from another country – were among the most suspect. This was especially true because Catholics tended to be immigrants who didn’t share the Puritanical aversion to alcohol that Americans did, and thus were perhaps the most responsible for moral decay. The patriotic bent also helped cast suspicion on the large number of newly arriving immigrants from Eastern Europe where the Bolsheviks were taking over; the Klan was steadfast in its fight against the specter of socialism before it could ruin American capitalism.

Though not as disdained as Catholics and immigrants, Blacks were also an obvious target of this iteration of the Klan, as were Jews and other religious minorities. Blacks were considered to threaten the purity of American culture, morals, and even genetics (a growing scientific area of study) in many ways, be it through stereotypical laziness or their unique forms of entertainment, such as jazz. But as many Blacks returned from fighting in World War I, they also expected to be treated as heroes on par with the White troops they had fought beside. This extended to finding employment, and many Whites were anxious that returning Black soldiers would displace them from their jobs. Indeed, Stephenson had served in the

Army during World War I, and he found many sympathetic recruits among fellow White soldiers who struggled to find their own employment upon returning home.

Ultimately, the downfall of Stephenson caused the Klan to collapse, not because members were suddenly embarrassed to be associated with these beliefs, but because they were embarrassed to be associated with the man who wasn’t the true peaceful defender of American Christian virtues he claimed he was. This is largely misunderstood today, but it helps emphasize that this form of White supremacy, like the forms that came before it in Indiana, found widespread adoption precisely because it was subtle and relatively nonviolent. And like the others, it came packaged as a seemingly reasonable extension of



political virtue and civic engagement.

This is by no means a complete history of race relations in Indiana. It focuses only on a single thread that runs through the narrow stream of our political history, and there are other worthwhile threads and broader topics to follow. Some may show Indiana in a better light, particularly those in which Blacks are the main characters of the story. Others may show just the opposite by highlighting that things haven’t always been nonviolent, such as the beating of Frederick Douglas by a White mob after he gave a speech in Pendleton in 1843, or the relative handful of racially-motivated lynchings that took place here. There are seven documented lynching events in Indiana, with 15 victims in total, the last occurring in Marion in 1937.

If we are to properly understand the complicated history of racial politics in Indiana, all these threads are important to follow. But the thread followed here is perhaps the best representation of the broad arc of our politics on matters of race, because it shows that the idea of White supremacy in Indiana has often manifested itself not as the violent mobs typically associated with the term, but as the mainstream politics of the masses. ❖

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Schmuhl says IN Dems' comeback is strategy, planning & execution

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Mike Schmuhl, campaign manager for Pete Buttigieg's meteoric rise to top-tier presidential contender, now is running to lead the Indiana Democratic Party. In November, he said he wouldn't run for state party chair. Why did he change his mind? We'll ask him.

Q. Mike, did you decide to run after former Sen. Joe Donnelly and some other party leaders urged you to do so?

A. The political landscape changed with election of President Biden, Democratic control of both houses of Congress, and events of Jan. 6. A number of people from across the state reached out over the last few weeks and urged me to reconsider. I felt backing was growing to put together a plan to win. Sen. Donnelly has always been supportive and encouraging in my efforts to strengthen the party.



Q. Hoosier Democrats were shellacked last November.

They haven't won a statewide race since 2012. They continue to have pathetically small state legislature minorities. Are you volunteering to be captain of the Titanic? Or is there a way to steer this ship away from more disaster?

A. There have been tough cycles for Hoosier Democrats. It'll take strategy, planning and execution to level the playing field. Still, we've been a pretty balanced and bipartisan state during my lifetime. Don't forget that Barack Obama won the state in 2008.

Q. You're right, Mike. Actually, it wasn't that long ago that Democrats occupied the governor's office for 16 straight years – Evan Bayh, Frank O'Bannon and Joe Kernan. Why the collapse?

A. Republicans built a big bench of politicians. Coupled with redistricting control and the nationalization of a lot of our media consumption, Indiana began to tilt more rightward. Nothing is permanent in politics. Overreach and one-party control without checks and balances leads to bad outcomes and people respond with their voices and votes.

Q. A chair needs to recruit candidates who can win. Would you encourage Joe Donnelly to run for senator again in 2022?

A. Joe has shown ability to win tough races and already has served in the Senate with distinction. He would be a great candidate, but I would leave that decision to him.

Q. You were campaign manager for the last Democrat to defeat Jackie Walorski for Congress, when Donnelly beat her in 2010. Now she wins by landslides. Is there any way to defeat her in 2022?

A. The district became more conservative after totally unbalanced redistricting before her first congressional election. As a result, she's been playing with a pretty strong head start. I don't think she's represented the district well. She's voted against health care coverage repeatedly, was against certifying President Biden's victory and she managed the defense of Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene.

Q. Running for state chair isn't like running in a general election. The choice will be made on March 20 by members of the Democratic State Central Committee. How do you persuade them?

A. I've been working the phones, communicating with members of the committee. I know most of them from my work in Hoosier politics. The response has been very positive thus far.

Q. You are now opposed by Trish Whitcomb, daughter of the late Republican Gov. Edgar Whitcomb. Divisive contest?

A. No. Trish is a lifelong Democrat and a really good person. We both agree that whatever happens, we want to be part of strengthening and improving our party.

Q. In Pete's presidential campaign, you eventually had nearly 600 full-time workers and over \$100 million in resources. The chair controls a relative drop in the bucket. Would you have enough resources to make a difference?



A. One of my top objectives is raising the resources it takes to be competitive, to organize supporters and voters, spread our message and promote the candidacies of people running at all levels.

Q. A friend worries that as chair you'd drop plans to refurbish and reopen the iconic Joe's Bar on Dunham Street, shattering her hopes of traditional pierogies for lunch there. Gonna reopen?

A. Tell your friend not to worry. My business partner and I definitely plan to reopen Joe's, hopefully this year. The previous owner's family has been really supportive, and we promise to keep the famous pierogies on the menu. ❖

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

Pence relationship with Trump called ‘amicable’

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – When we last checked in with Donald Trump and Mike Pence, there were bruised feelings over the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol insurrection that the former unleashed with the mob chanting, “Hang Mike Pence.”

The former vice president skipped the former president’s Joint Base Andrews sendoff and attended President Joe Biden’s inauguration.

CNN reported earlier this week that the ultimate political odd couple have spoken twice on the phone, with a source calling their relationship “amicable.”

This Sunday, Trump is expected to address CPAC in Florida. It is a trip that Pence has made more than a dozen times, but not this year. The knowledgeable source said Monday that the reason Pence isn’t going to CPAC is that “it’s tradition the outgoing pres and VP stay quiet, and the incoming president deserves that courtesy.”

CPAC Director Dan Schneider appealed to Pence to show up. “We’re disappointed the former vice president isn’t joining us,” Schneider told MSNBC’s Joshua Johnson Sunday. “He can still come. He is a real champion for conservatism. He spoke at CPAC 13, 14 times over the years, and I know if he were to come to CPAC, he would be treated very warmly with great respect, and frankly, I really hope that he reconsiders, and if he wants to come, we’ll make room for him.”

The unknown for Pence is how the CPAC audience would react to his presence. “People don’t want to risk (Trump’s) wrath, but no one really knows how it’s going to play out,” the Pence source told CNN.

U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, an Indiana Republican who chairs the conservative Republican Study Committee, told CNN that a group of members met at Pence’s transition office in the Washington area on Tuesday afternoon, talking about the way forward for their party while also touting the accomplishments of the past. “He spoke very favorably about his relationship with President Trump,” Banks told

CNN. “I got the sense they speak often and maintain the same personal friendship and relationship now that they have for four years.”

If the Trump/Pence relationship is thawing, it’s headed in the opposite direction than the former president and Nikki Haley. Politico reported Haley reached out to former President Donald Trump on Wednesday to request a sit-down at Mar-a-Lago. Trump refused.

This comes after Tim Alberta quoted Haley in Politico saying, “I think he’s going to find himself further and further isolated,” Haley said of the defeated president. “I think his business is suffering at this point. I think he’s lost any sort of political viability he was going to have. I think he’s lost his social media, which meant the world to him. I mean, I think he’s lost the things that really could have kept him moving.”

Another Trump friend and ally is struggling. Mike Lindell, the CEO of MyPillow, said he expects to lose \$65 million in revenue this year, after his company was boycotted by retailers over his unsubstantiated claims of electoral fraud (Daily Mail). Lindell, 59, was sued by Dominion Voting Systems for \$1.3 billion on Monday in a defamation lawsuit, in response to



U.S. Rep. Jim Banks meets with former vice president Mike Pence earlier this week.

his continued claim that the election was stolen, and Dominion’s machines switched Donald Trump’s votes. In the suit Lindell was accused of making the wild claims in a bid to appear more frequently on television, and promote his company. On Monday, Lindell told Insider that he was instead facing huge losses, as a result of his claims. “I lost 20 retailers, and it’s cost me \$65 million this year that I won’t get back, OK?” Lindell said.

“There’s your story. Print it right. Don’t try and twist this.”

New York Times columnist Tom Edsall writes that Trump may be boxing Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell out. Minutes after the Senate acquitted Trump in his impeachment trial, McConnell unleashed a scathing critique, saying that the former president was morally responsible for the U.S. Capitol insurrection.

The February 19-22 Economist/YouGov poll cited above found that 48% of Republicans said they would not vote for a candidate critical of Trump, more than double the 23% who said they would, while 29% were not sure. Similarly, 61% of Republicans said a Trump endorsement would make them more likely to vote for a candidate; only 5% said it would make it less likely.

Since the violence of Jan. 6, there have been widespread reports of many Republicans giving up their party to become registered independents or Democrats. On Feb. 10, the New York Times reported that in 25 states with readily available data, “nearly 140,000 Republicans had quit the party,” including more than 12,000 in Pennsylvania, 10,000-plus in Arizona and more than 33,000 in California. “These defections suggest a weakening of Republican strength in upcoming general elections, but in terms of internal party conflict, the defections only strengthen Trump’s hand,” said Times columnist Tom Edsall. “As anti-Trump voters leave the party, the pro-Trump wing gains more power.”

Secretary of state update

Our sources are still saying they expect State Rep. Holli Sullivan to be named secretary of state by Gov. Eric Holcomb following Connie Lawson’s resignation last week.

The Elkhart Truth reported that State Rep. Timothy Wesco has also expressed interest in the post. HPI sources say that Holcomb is working closely with the Indiana Republican Central Committee on the selection, and that Sullivan remains the clear frontrunner.



Indiana Republican Chairman Kyle Hupfer told HPI, “We’ll follow a similar path we’ve done historically with the LG and auditor selection. We’ll do a thorough background check and vetting of those who are interested. We’ll whittle it down until the governor makes the decision.”

Asked if there are others beyond Sullivan and Wesco who have expressed interest, Hupfer said, “There are, but we’re being respectful of their interests and are keeping it confidential.”

Hupfer said that the process will probably conclude by the end of March, though he didn’t rule out an earlier decision.

The Indiana Libertarian Party has called Secretary Lawson’s resignation last week as an example of “one-party tyranny.” Tim Maguire, chairman of the Libertarian Party of Indiana, said, “The mid-term vacancy perpetuates one-party tyranny, and represents an increasingly common practice to disenfranchise Hoosier voters by ensuring that Republican candidates only run as incumbents.”

Parties

Elsener joins Marion County GOP chair race

Joe Elsener, former deputy campaign manager for Holcomb For Indiana, has joined the list of candidates seeking the Marion County Republican chair. “Excited to announce that I filed this morning to serve as chairman of the @IndyGOP,” Elsener tweeted today. “I’m looking forward to many conversations with grassroots supporters and precinct leaders on the direction of our county party in the days ahead.” Hupfer told HPI, “If he’s selected, we’re going to collectively in-kind a third of his time and restart the rebuild.” Elsener joins Councilman Michael-Paul Hart, Alex Henby and John Schmitz in the field. Cindy Mowery, the Republican appointee to the Marion County Voter Registration Board, dropped out of the race Wednesday morning. The IndyStar reported Tuesday that Sen. Jack Sandlin filed a bill that would void an Indianapolis ethics ordinance that would forbid a county chair from doing business with the city.

Counties reorganize on March 6.

Allen County Chairman Steve Shine, first elected in 1993, is expected to seek another term. Vanderburgh County Chairman Wayne Parke will not seek another term.

Congress

District by district polarization

Daily Kos Elections completed its count of the 2020 presidential vote in all 435 congressional districts, and it found that Joe Biden carried 224 districts, while Donald Trump won 211 (NBC Meet The Press Daily). That’s almost identical to the actual 222-213 partisan split in Congress that resulted after the 2020 congressional contests. There were only 16 crossover districts in 2020 – nine Republicans held districts that Biden carried last year, and seven Democrats represent districts that Trump won. None of them was in Indiana. The other 419 congressional districts are represented by the party that won it in the presidential contest. Those 16 crossover districts from the 2020 election are down from 35 in 2016 and 83 in 2008. It’s just the latest data underscoring how polarized – and nationalized – our politics have become. As we’ve pointed out before, only six states in the country now have split Senate representation, where a Democrat and a Republican both represent it in the U.S. Senate. That’s down from 21 split states in 1993.



Despite half of COVID deaths, little legislation on nursing homes

INDIANAPOLIS – The COVID-19 pandemic exposed shortcomings in Indiana’s long-term care system, but the Indiana Legislature took no action to reform care at the nursing home level this year (Downard, [CNHI](#)).

Almost half of the nearly 12,000 Hoosiers who’ve died of COVID-19 resided in nursing homes and other assisted living facilities.

“There’s a lot of discussion around nursing home care ... taking place as the administra-

tion has outlined changes that they would make,” House Speaker Todd Huston, R-Fishers, said. “I do not, frankly, remember a ton of bills that dealt specifically with that topic.” Legislators filed a handful of bills related to care for the elderly, including a bill to allow nursing home residents to consent to room monitoring, but few attempted to address Indiana’s poor care outcomes exposed by the coronavirus. “Obviously, nursing homes were kind of ground zero for COVID-19 ... so that is of course a very serious concern,” Senate Pro Tem Rodric Bray, R-Martinsville, said. “We’ve had some conversations about that, but there’s no legislation right now.” Advocates initially had high hopes for long-term care reform in Indiana, a system that disproportionately relies on skilled nursing facilities and assisted living rather than home- or community-based care models.

Jennifer Sullivan, the Family and Social Services Administration secretary, announced this year that the governor’s administration recognized a shift in Hoosiers, with more preferring to age at home rather than in institutional facilities. She called this a “rebalancing” of the state’s Medicaid budget, which pays significantly more money to facilities. “We will always need quality institutional nursing home care,” Sullivan emphasized. “This is important to support everyone, and we want to make sure that everyone has access to these types of services across Indiana; we really just want to make sure that the entire continuum is strong and supports quality.” Last week, the state announced another 660 deaths attributable to long-term care facilities, bringing the death toll to 5,870 Hoosiers at nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

House scuttles retirement fund bills

State and local government employees, including Hoosier teachers, can breathe a little easier knowing their retirement funds, for now, will not be subject to political whims (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Two proposals seeking to politicize the investments of the Indiana Public Retirement System (INPRS) failed to advance out of the Republican-

controlled House by this week’s deadline, and likely will not again be considered by state lawmakers this year. House Bill1180 would have mandated INPRS sell off any direct or indirect investments in any business enterprise that chooses, for any reason, to not support or to reduce its support for companies engaged in the production or manufacturing of natural gas, oil, coal, petrochemicals, forestry products, nuclear energy or agricultural commodities. The proposal did not advance out of the House Committee on Employment, Labor and Pensions following an unusual hearing where the sponsor, state Rep. Alan Morrison, R-Terre Haute, was absent, so the committee chairman, state Rep. Heath VanNatter, R-Kokomo, permitted Republican former state Rep. Matt Bell, now a coal industry lobbyist, to present the legislation to the committee. The second measure, House Bill1387, was approved on an 11-1 vote by the House Committee on Government and Regulatory Reform, but died after House Speaker Todd Huston, R-Fishers, sent it to the Ways and Means Committee for further analysis.

Tallian bill on juvenile justice passes

State Sen. Karen Tallian, D-Ogden Dunes, is working to protect Hoosier children whose alleged offenses land them in the adult criminal justice system (Carden, [NWI Times](#)). Tallian recently won near-unanimous chamber approval for Senate Bill368 that clarifies key portions of Indiana’s juvenile justice statutes. The measure requires individuals younger than 18 who are charged as adults to still be housed in a secure juvenile facility, unless a court determines, and regularly affirms, it is in the best interest of justice that the juvenile be jailed alongside adults. In addition, the legislation automatically requires courts to expunge most juvenile offenses from an individual’s record when the person turns 19.

State doubles down on vaccine eligibility

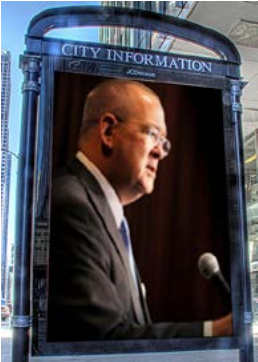
A day after Indiana expanded coronavirus vaccine to all Hoosiers 60 and older, state health officials doubled down on eligibility restrictions and announced new guidelines for clinics administering shots (Smith, AP). Without enough vaccine for all Hoosiers, state health commissioner Dr. Kristina Box said Wednesday that officials are stressing adherence to the state’s vaccine rollout plan that bases shot eligibility on age, rather than moving up teachers and other essential workers as other states have done. Several clinics that have “ignored” those guidelines will not receive any more first-dose vaccines, Box said, though she declined to indicate where or how many such vaccination sites would be affected. Box said state health officials are reaching out to other clinics that have deviated from the eligibility guidelines “to find out why and, to re-educate them about the importance of following the state’s priority list” when scheduling appointments and adding names to waitlists. “We are not trying to be the vaccine police, that is the last thing we want to be,” Box said. ❖



Teacher pay is symptom of our deeper problems

By MICHAEL HICKS

MUNCIE – The Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission released their report in mid-December. All Hoosiers should be interested in what it did and did not say about teacher pay, along with recommendations they offered. I begin with some stark observations about education finance.



After adjusting for inflation, Indiana spending per student is down more than 7% since 2010, and Indiana dropped from 22nd nationally in school spending per student in 2004 to 36th by 2018. It wasn't in the report, but school spending, as a share of Indiana's Gross Domestic Product, dropped from 2.6% to 2.2% since 2010.

That means by last year we spent roughly \$1.3 billion less per year on education than we would have if we grew educational spending at the same rate as the overall economy in that same time period. The Commission figured that the actual cuts to K-12 spending works out to about \$580 million per year.

That is almost identical to the \$600 million they claim it would take to bring teacher pay back to 2010 levels. In other words, almost 97% of the reduction in educational funding came out of teacher's salaries. This should make clear two important facts. First, it is unlikely that there are excess savings hidden somewhere in school budgets.

Second, the difficulty Hoosier schools have in recruiting teachers is not a supply-side problem. It is about pay. The Commission also listed 37 policy or tax issues. Not all of these address teachers' pay. The most numerous recommendations were those that privatize local school services, reallocate money from one use to another or make lump-sum payments to pension plans.

There were 13 of these recommendations, but the cost savings from these aren't clear. The Commission also recommended three administrative changes that had no dollars attached to them. The Commission suggested five policies that would allow schools to achieve some economies of scale in purchasing goods or services. They offered three recommendations that would save schools money by consolidation or outsourcing of staff. Six recom-

mendations called for shifting spending from existing state or local taxes to school salaries. Two proposed cutting teacher benefits and using the savings for teacher salaries. Three recommendations involved increasing state and local spending on schools.

As best as I can tell, 35 recommendations in this study might free up \$50 million to \$100 million per year for teacher pay, though most of this comes from cutting teacher benefits. Commission members might dispute my estimates, but, with all due respect, I've written several technical studies and a book on cost savings from government and school consolidation.

A potential \$100 million savings from implementing all these 35 steps is optimistic. The bottom line is that, to get school spending per student back to 2010 levels, Hoosier taxpayers would need to spend an additional \$500 million or so on K-12 education each year. Even then, this would only get us back to where we were a decade ago and would leave teachers with fewer benefits.

The report was less forthright than it should have been about Indiana's decade of funding cuts to education. Even their gingerly treatment of that fact didn't prevent the report from being delayed until after the election. Also, the study claimed that Indiana's spending across 12 categories was not an outlier relative to other states. That is simply not true.

In fact, Indiana spending is a full standard deviation below the national average in total spending, instructional spending, and student support spending. Indiana school spending is the very definition of an outlier.

Nonetheless, if you take time to read the full

report and the footnotes, the problem is clear — we spend far too little on education. What the report hinted at is that this has deeper and longer-term impacts on Indiana. These were mostly buried deep in the footnotes. They should've been the first bullet point in the executive summary.

I will be blunter.

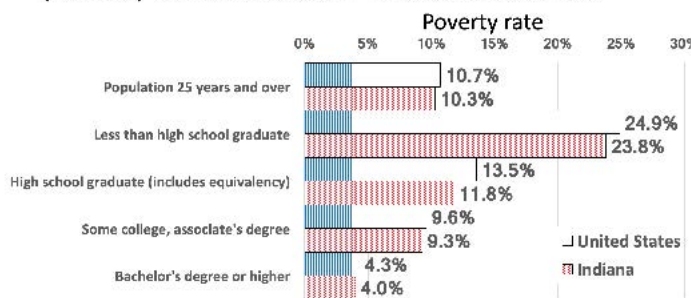
From 2010 to 2019,

Indiana's worker productivity actually declined. That is the first time that has ever happened. As a consequence, our per capita personal income saw its largest relative decline in history. It is an unpleasant thing to say, but the cause of this is the declining relative quality of our workforce.

Economists have understood for decades that human capital (really, the educational attainment of our workforce) is the strongest causal force in economic growth. Today, the share of adults who attend and complete college is the primary difference between regional wages and productivity.

In that key metric, Indiana ranks 40th in across

Education is a slightly better defense vs poverty in Indiana than in U.S. as a whole



states and territories. To put that in context, Tennessee ranks 39th and Puerto Rico ranks 41st, and both are actively improving. In contrast, Indiana's share of adults with a bachelor's degree declined in 2019. We are closer to Mississippi than the U.S. average, and we are heading downward Mississippi.

The teacher salary problem is real, but it is only a symptom of a much wider and more pernicious problem. Indiana's policies towards education and training are failing. That failure is slowing our economy, and the poor decisions of the past decade will continue to bear bitter fruit for a decade. Our problem isn't just funding, which is too bad. That would be an easy remedy.

Hoosiers are among the least taxed people in the developed world. We have plenty of room to better fund education. The problem is in how we approach workforce training, how we crowd K-12 instruction with dubious workforce preparation, how we incentivize public universi-

ties to attract out-of-state students, and most shamefully, how we ended the aspirational approach to education.

Indiana is failing at the single most important thing the state does to ensure a growing economy—educate our children and young adults. Our "Mississippi Strategy" of low taxes, declining educational attainment and huge tax incentives to businesses is finally having an effect. It is precisely what an economic model would predict; declining relative wages, declining productivity and the need to offer even larger incentives to lure employers into our state. That isn't a strategy any Hoosier should be proud of supporting. But, it is certainly having an effect. ❖

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.

Poverty amid prosperity

By **MORTON J. MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Poverty is a human issue with many dimensions including race, gender, occupation, and geography. Its elimination is also multi-dimensional.

When not battling with minority members, the dominate Republicans in the Indiana House of Representatives might attend to the plight of 868,000 Hoosiers (13.4%) below the poverty threshold. In the event it did not strike you, 868,000 persons in 2019 was about the same as the population of 43 Indiana counties combined.



Before we go further, consider those poverty thresholds which include numerous benefits such as Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, Social

Security, pensions, etc. For a single person under age 65, the threshold is income of \$13,064. A college student, working half-time at \$12.56/hr., fits that description. Thus, Monroe and Delaware counties, with their relatively large college populations, lead the state with poverty rates in excess of 20%. Vigo and Tippecanoe are similarly college-impacted counties with large numbers of young, part-time workers.

Those four counties are among the top nine Indiana counties with poverty rates in excess of 17%. Switzerland and Crawford, in that same group, are traditional poverty locales, geographically distanced from opportunity. Fayette, Grant and Marion, also in the same group, are victims of major shifts in manufacturing.

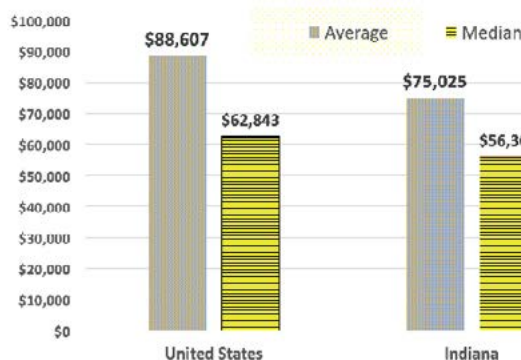
For the household with one adult and one child, the threshold is \$17,308; two adults and two children, \$25,465. How many of our state legislators can imagine living a full year, in this century, on so little income?

What is the color of poverty in Indiana? It's White; 70% of all Hoosiers in poverty are White, but the poverty rate for the White population is only 11%. By contrast, Blacks or African Americans are 19% of those in poverty while constituting just 9% of the total population; the poverty rate for Blacks is 27%. The Hispanic or Latino populations of Indiana are 12% of those in poverty, but just 7% of all Hoosiers, with a 22% poverty rate.

Importantly for Whites, Blacks and Hispanics, the poverty rate is higher in Indiana than in the nation at large. Indiana matches the national poverty rate (13.4%) only because our Black and Hispanic populations are a lower percent of the total than is the case nationally.

Hendricks, Hamilton and Boone counties have poverty rates at or below 6%. This trio of proximate prosperity have relatively small Black and Hispanic populations. However, in 36 of Indiana's 92 counties, the Black poverty

2019 household income for U.S. and Indiana



The "average" income for Indiana households was \$13,582 (15%) less than the "average" U.S. household.

The "median" income for Indiana households was \$6,540 (10%) less than the "median" U.S. household.

Not only do U.S. households have higher incomes than Hoosier households, but the U.S. has proportionately more high-income households.

rate is 33% or higher. A 33% poverty rate exists in 18 counties for Hispanic populations and in 16 counties for Asian populations.

What's to be done to eliminate poverty, not just ameliorate it? Destroy the historically accepted barriers to

education, health, employment, and housing which exist for so many in this "State that Works" for so few. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonj-marcus@yahoo.com.

What makes us want to live in Indiana?

By **ANNE LAKER**

EVANSVILLE — Indiana Republicans are grinning like Cheshire cats and running like retrievers. To be a Republican lawmaker right now is to be exhilarated by free rein. Is even the governor a mere speedbump?

Tenants have no defense against landlords, teacher pay is in the cellar, and green building materials are being outlawed at state universities. Here's a question that can't be dodged: What exactly makes a citizen want to live in Indiana?



Case in point: Most states have one super polluter (an industry that emits toxic air pollution). Southwestern Indiana still has four, Duke Energy's Gibson power plant, AES' Petersburg power plant, NIPSCO's Schahfer power plant, and Alcoa's Warrick metals plant. As a

direct result, Hoosiers die in higher numbers from cancer, as well as heart and respiratory diseases, made worse by the high poverty in these rural counties. While market forces are moving away from coal, state lawmakers have never taken special action to clean up Indiana's air.

That reality stands in darkly humorous contrast to a recent campaign called "Hoosiers by Choice" put forth by the new Indiana Destination Development Corporation (IDDC). "A lot of [the campaign] is focused on attracting talent," IDDC CEO Elaine Bedel told Inside INdiana Business. "It's really to tell that quality of life story that sometimes it's hard to get out."

Is it a story we want to get out? Ask an Evansville widow whose husband died of a heart attack. In areas with poorer air quality, pollution appears to accelerate deposits in the arteries.

For some in the General Assembly, the lack of regard for human health is hard to stomach. A self-described Twitter rant by Rep. Ryan Dvorak (D-South Bend) last week roiled with frustration. Rep. Dvorak shared a graphic showing Indiana's #1 status among all states and territories on the U.S. Toxic Release Inventory. Then he added: "The House Environmental Affairs Committee has met ZERO times to hear ZERO bills and take ZERO testimony from anyone about anything at all," he wrote. "In a normal

world – a world where people prefer not to die of cancer – those rankings would usually elicit concern. Perhaps even a passing interest from the government of the state elected by those people."

Do Hoosiers simply take pollution for granted? A debate is raging now among Posey County residents about a 3,000-acre solar farm. Those opposed say it will destroy farmland and have no local benefit. Those in favor wonder why their fellow residents are protesting a solar farm, while the petroleum refinery, ethanol plant and aforementioned coal-fired power plants have limitless pollution potential.

Then there's the irony of HB1381, authored by Rep. Ed Soliday (R-Valparaiso). The utility industry's best friend is now gunning for wind and solar projects. His bill bars local government entities from adopting "stricter-than" rules for the siting of these projects. Meanwhile, the Hoosier Environmental Council is fighting for an amendment to the bill that would guarantee sustainable ground cover on the land beneath the solar panels for better stormwater control and the attraction of pollinators.

Though market forces will phase coal out, Indiana will be cleaning up our coal mess for a long time. Sad then, that the House Environmental Affairs Committee (the target of Rep. Dvorak's Tweeted ire), chaired by Rep. Douglas Gutwein (R-Francesville), has refused to hear HB1469. Authored by Rep. Pat Boy (D-Michigan City), this bill will set standards for the disposal of coal ash, including provisions for local public input. Our legislature will tell counties what's good for them, except when it's really bad.

Other bills in play handicap government itself. HB1436, from the desk of Rep. Jeffrey Thompson (R-Lizton), would require IDEM and DNR to pay legal fees incurred by a party that successfully challenges an agency enforcement or permitting decision. The agencies would also have to take on the burden of proof when denying permits, letting applicants off the hook. Like the hotly contested wetlands bill, HB1436 sells out our natural resources for the convenience of a few.

Republicans have the power. They have the power to do right by Indiana citizens and protect us from contamination, toxins and industries that poison air, water, land, hearts and lungs. They might even find that cleaning up Indiana's environment is popular among voters! Until then, "quality of life in Indiana" feels like an unintentional punch line. ❖

A consultant and grant writer, Laker is principal of Laker Verbal LLC.

U.S. relies on citizens making wise choices

By **LEE HAMILTON**

BLOOMINGTON – As the events of the past few months have unfolded, I have often found myself wondering what our Founders would have made of it all. Impossible to know, of course, but they had plenty of insight to offer.



In particular, I keep returning to these lines from James Madison. He delivered them during the Virginia convention to ratify the Constitution, arguing that the surest safeguard against legislators and a government bent on malfeasance is the people themselves.

“I go on this great republican principle, that the people will have virtue and intelligence

to select men of virtue and wisdom,” he said. “Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks—no form of government can render us secure.” We depend, he said, not on the virtue of the people we elect, but of “the people who are to choose them.”

That pretty much sums it up, doesn't it? Our country rests on the faith that we the people will do the right thing. The design of our government may be remarkable, but it does not matter nearly as much as the qualities of the American people and their capacity to make it work. If we do not step up, if we do not invest our time and energy and abilities in making the system work, it will not.

One of the remarkable aspects of the founding era was that a relative handful of people, in a country that did not even number 4 million at the time, developed a constitution with very little to go on and then made it work. Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, and a few others had the skills, knowledge, and insight to hammer out, debate, and craft a system from the ground up, then to articulate it and persuade the political elite that this republican form of government could work.

And what may have been most impressive was that they had confidence in the notion that people had the capacity to govern themselves. Yes, they hedged, both in the elaborate balance of power they built and in who actually got to vote. But they also created a system that, over the centuries, was capable of expanding the franchise and

delivering a more equitable, broader voice in government because that was the idea at its core.

A key aspect of that idea, as Madison articulated, is that virtue is part of republican government. This sounds strange to say in the modern world. We tend to think of “virtue” as moral probity or honesty or integrity. Madison and the other Founders had something more encompassing in mind. They thought of virtue as including a sense of civic self-sacrifice: The ability to overcome self-interest and act for the benefit of the broader community. And they expected it not just in political leaders, but in citizens themselves.

What may be most striking is that they had confidence in the American people to carry out this grand experiment and believed in the patriotism and capacity of those people to serve as protectors of civil liberties and of the due process of democracy. I could not help but think of that faith in the wake of last November's election, as countless poll workers and elections officials in towns and cities and states around the country stoically carried on their work to the best of their ability in the face of unrelenting antagonism.

We remain in a time of great testing for the system Madison and his generation created. Though it is a remarkable constitutional design, created during a period of enormous change, turmoil, and confusion, they understood that the whole thing would fail if the people lacked the capacity to make it work. A lot of Americans have lost trust in the government, in the system as a whole, and in one another. This is not without reason. But it helps to look back and remember that everything rests on us — on our ability to choose our leaders wisely, to work with one another, and to reward the Founders' faith that ordinary people can, by dint of their efforts, make this a more perfect union. ❖

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..





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Drawing on reader compliments, criticism

By **KELLY HAWES**
CNHI Indiana Bureau

ANDERSON – I heard from a few readers concerning my column on the effort to make the assault on the U.S. Capitol seem normal. One reader liked the column. "I'll try to drown out the negative responses from Trump naysayers," he wrote. "That was a perfect article."



Another guy was a little less impressed. He summed up his thoughts in the subject line of his email. "You're an idiot," he wrote. This reader insisted I was wrong to suggest some folks might be trying to play down what happened at President Donald J. Trump's "stop the steal" rally. "No one is trying to minimize Jan. 6 at the Capitol," he wrote.

He said the common denominator in all of the recent protests across the country was the display of violence. "The 'cause' that is being furthered in each event is different and unique, and so your 'has never been to ...' whatever you said, can be said of each event," he wrote. "Or as Pelosi said about rioting, 'People do what people do.'"

I could be wrong, I guess, but as I read his words, I almost had the feeling he was trying to minimize what happened during the assault on the Capitol.

Another reader accused me of having a double standard when it came to mob violence. "You can deny it all you want," she wrote, "but the fact is that Republicans denounce all riots and violence, while Democrats only denounce the Capitol mob."

Oh, they might decry violence, she said, but Democrats will never call out the culprits. Groups like Black Lives Matter and Antifa are responsible for "huge amounts of violence," she said, but, "Democrat politicians and media hacks" make excuses or even encourage them "because they are Democrats."

Just to be clear, she had nothing good to say about the "bunch of clowns" who invaded the Capitol. They had no chance, she said, of overturning the presidential election.

"They were an impotent, unarmed group that killed no one, unlike the violent groups on the left," she wrote. "The only person killed was a woman, the Trump supporter, who was shot by a Capitol policeman.

No one was shot by the mob. They were a lousy bunch, condemned by both parties, unlike the leftist violent mobs that are only despised by Republicans."

There's a lot to digest there, not the least of which is her use of the word "despised" in reference to "leftist violent mobs." The various factions in this country will never agree on politics, but do we really have to hate each other?

I was also struck by her claim that only one person died in the Capitol riot. Actually, at least five people died, one of them a Capitol police officer named Brian Sicknick.

Police initially reported that Sicknick had been beaten with a fire extinguisher, but subsequent reports say investigators are at odds over that claim. There have been no official updates, but anonymous sources quote medical experts as saying the officer did not die of blunt force trauma. Sicknick's brother, Ken, told ProPublica the family had been told the officer suffered a stroke resulting from a blood clot.

Police are still investigating the officer's death, but at this writing, they've made no arrests. Still, it seems premature to suggest he didn't die as a result of the rampage. It's also inaccurate to say the mob was unarmed. At least one guy arrested after the event had a book bag containing a semi-automatic handgun. Police also seized an assault rifle, a crossbow and 11 Molotov cocktails. Other rioters had lead pipes and pepper spray.

My reader closed her note with yet another way to describe me. "You are a real jewel, Kelly," she wrote. My guess is she was being sarcastic. ❖

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Assessment of absentee voting in 2020 election

By **ALAN I. ABRAMOWITZ**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. – The 2020 presidential election was remarkable in many respects. First and foremost, despite taking place in the midst of a deadly pandemic that would result in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans, the 2020 election resulted in the highest rate of turnout in over a century. According to Michael McDonald of the University of Florida, 159.7 million Americans cast ballots in 2020 – an increase of roughly 20 million over the 2016 presidential election. The estimated 66.7% turnout of eligible voters easily eclipsed the post-World War II record of 63.8% set in 1960.

According to many observers, one of the key factors contributing to the record turnout in 2020 was a dramatic increase in the availability of absentee voting in many states. Liberalized absentee voting rules made it possible for millions of Americans to fill out their ballots at home and place them in a mailbox or a drop-box rather than risking exposure to the deadly coronavirus by voting in person. According to a survey of over 18,000 registered voters conducted by MIT political scientist Charles Stewart III, between 2016 and 2020, the percentage of votes cast by absentee ballot in the United States increased from 21% to 46%.

The data in Table 1 show that there was a strong relationship between the prevalence of absentee voting and the rules governing absentee voting in the states. I divided states into four categories based on how easy or difficult they made it for voters to cast absentee ballots. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, five states continued to require a valid excuse for absentee voting such as being over 70 or 75 years of age, temporary out-of-state residence, or a permanent disability. Fear of exposure to coronavirus was not considered a valid excuse in these states. As a result, an average of only 11% of voters cast absentee ballots in those states. In contrast, 10 states allowed no-excuses

absentee voting and automatically mailed ballots to all voters. In those states, an average of 73% of voters cast absentee ballots.

In this study, I address two questions about the impact of expanded absentee voting on the 2020 election. First, to what extent did it lead to higher turnout, as its proponents hoped? Second, did it benefit the Democratic presidential candidate, Joe Biden, as President Trump and other Republican critics of absentee voting frequently alleged? There is no evidence to support claims by Trump and his political allies that absentee voting resulted in widespread fraud. However, there is considerable evidence that Democratic voters were much more likely to take advantage of absentee voting in 2020 than Republican voters -- in part, because President Trump frequently attacked the legitimacy of absentee voting, thereby discouraging its use by his supporters.



Encouragement of Absentee Voting	Percent Voting by Absentee Ballot	Number of States
Low	11.3	5
Moderate	29.4	20
High	47.2	16
Very High	73.0	10

Table 2: Correlations of absentee voting with change in turnout and change in Democratic vote margin in the states

		Correlations		
		Pctabsentee	Chturnout	ChDPres
Pctabsentee	Pearson Correlation	1	.529**	.026
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.854
	N	51	51	51
Chturnout	Pearson Correlation	.529**	1	-.117
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.414
	N	51	51	51
ChDPres	Pearson Correlation	.026	-.117	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.854	.414	
	N	51	51	51

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 displays correlations between the prevalence of absentee voting in 2020 and changes in turnout and in Democratic vote margin between 2016 and 2020 across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The results show that there was a strong and statistically significant

correlation between the prevalence of absentee voting and increased voter turnout in 2020. States with higher rates of absentee voting generally experienced larger increases in turnout than those with lower rates of absentee voting. On the other hand, the results show that there was no relationship at all between the prevalence of absentee voting and changes in Democratic vote margin between 2016 and

2020. States with high rates of absentee voting did not see larger increases in Democratic vote margins between these two elections than states with low rates of absentee voting.

In order to provide more definitive tests of the effects of absentee voting on turnout and Democratic vote margins, I conducted two regression analyses. The first regression analysis examined the impact of absentee voting on 2020 turnout while controlling for 2016 turnout and a dummy variable indicating whether a state was a swing state in 2020. This was based on the hypothesis that turnout would be higher in hotly contested states than in other states due to greater efforts by the campaigns to mobilize voters in those states. The states that are defined as “swing states” for Table 3 are Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, North Carolina, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin. The second regression analysis examined the impact of absentee voting on the 2020 Biden vote margin while controlling for the 2016 Clinton vote margin. The results of these two regression analyses are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

The results displayed in Table 3 show that this simple regression model explains about 90% of the variation in 2020 turnout across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. By far the strongest predictor of 2020 turnout is 2016 turnout. There is a great deal of continuity in relative turnout among states over these four years – states with relatively high rates of turnout in 2016 tended to have relatively high rates of turnout in 2020 and states with relatively low rates of turnout in 2016 tended to have relatively low rates of turnout in 2020. However, after controlling for 2016 turnout and swing state status, the prevalence of absentee voting in 2020 had a moderately strong and statistically significant impact on turnout in 2020. According to these results, an increase of 10 percentage points in the prevalence of absentee voting in a state would have increased turnout by a little more than 0.7 percentage points.

In contrast, the results displayed in Table 4 indicate that the prevalence of absentee voting had no effect on Joe Biden’s vote margin in 2020. The regression model explains almost 99% of the variance in Biden’s vote margin, but that is due entirely to the powerful effect of 2016 Clinton vote margin. Just adding three points to Clinton’s margin turned out to be an excellent predictor of Biden’s vote margin in the states. Whether a state had a relatively high or relatively low rate of absentee voting had no effect on Biden’s vote margin after controlling for Clinton’s vote margin.

Conclusions

The evidence presented in this study leads to two clear conclusions. First, the dramatic increase in absentee voting in 2020 contributed to increased voter turnout. Even after controlling for 2016 turnout and swing state

Table 3: Regression analysis of voter turnout in the states

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.951 ^a	.905	.899	1.8570	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Swingstate, Pctabsentee, Turnout16

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	16.615	2.635		6.306	.000
	Turnout16	.788	.045	.824	17.635	.000
	Pctabsentee	.073	.012	.294	6.322	.000
	Swingstate	1.089	.636	.077	1.711	.094

a. Dependent Variable: Turnout20

status, the prevalence of absentee voting in a state was a significant predictor of turnout in 2020. Eased absentee voting rules were not the only reason for increased turnout in 2020, but they did make a difference. Second, increased absentee voting did not favor Joe Biden’s can-

Table 4: Regression analysis of Biden margin in the states

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.993 ^a	.987	.986	2.8023	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Pctabsentee, DPres16

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.988	.871		3.432	.001
	DPres16	1.001	.018	.993	56.493	.000
	Pctabsentee	.003	.018	.003	.147	.884

a. Dependent Variable: DPres20

didacy. After controlling for 2016 Democratic vote margin, the prevalence of absentee voting in a state had no effect at all on 2020 Democratic vote margin.

These findings suggest that efforts by Republican legislators in a number of states to roll back eased absentee voting rules and make it more difficult for voters to take advantage of absentee voting in the future are unlikely to benefit GOP candidates. Not only is there no evidence that absentee voting leads to widespread fraud, there is also no evidence that it favors Democratic candidates. ❖

Ken de la Bastide, Anderson Herald Bulletin:

It has been an interesting week at the Indiana Statehouse. What took place was a reminder of the program "This is the Week that Was." Members of the House acted in an uncivil manner when discussing legislation to remove a predominately white area from the South Bend school district, which is predominately Black. Black members of the Indiana House called the legislation racist, discriminatory and promoting segregation. That brought "boos" from some House Republicans and a reported verbal exchange between a Black Democrat and white Republican. Clearly, there is not a bipartisan atmosphere at the Indiana General Assembly, with GOP supermajorities in both the House and Senate. So it would seem even more important for the GOP majority to show some tolerance and respect toward the views of House Democrats. I'm not implying any member of the Legislature is discriminatory. But appearances are crucial. How unfortunate that members would feel the need to "boo" another legislator addressing an issue. Hopefully, Speaker Todd Huston will take a more active role in maintaining order. ❖



John Krull, Statehouse File: Something about Black people speaking their minds scares the heck out of conservatives who like to present themselves as staunch defenders of liberty. These rightwing tough guys are so freaked out by free speech that they melt down even when the people who are calling them out don't have the power to do anything but ... speak. The Feb. 18 debacle in the Indiana House of Representatives is but one example. That episode of tragedy and farce began when Rep. Greg Porter, D-Indianapolis, spoke about a bill that would allow students from racially diverse South Bend Community Schools to transfer to a nearby system that is almost exclusively white. He said the bill was discriminatory. Porter is a member of the Black caucus. Members of the caucus dressed for the day in traditional African garb to celebrate Black History Month. Porter's comments so incensed some conservative members of the Republican caucus that they began booing and trying to shout the Democrat down. "I have a right to speak," Porter said before surrendering the floor. Rep. Vernon Smith, D-Gary, followed him. The conservative lawmakers booed him, too. Several of them gathered in the back of the room and ostentatiously ignored him. One of them — Rep. Jim Lucas, R-Seymour — even left the chamber in protest. One of the lawmakers involved in a dust-up, Rep. Sean Eberhart, R-Shelbyville, denied there were any racial tensions involved in the legislative meltdown — at least not on his part. "I don't have a racist bone in my body," he said. Lucas swears he doesn't "see color." Eberhart vows he doesn't have "a racist bone" in his body. If we could just find another lawmaker to assert that some of his or her "best friends are Black," we would have a winner in the game of racial self-justification bingo. What they're really interested in is making sure that everyone has the freedom to think and speak exactly as they

do. They want this so much they try to strip Black legislators of the power to speak when the power to speak is the only power those Black lawmakers have. Something those Black leaders said must have scared the angry conservative legislators right down to their socks. There's only one thing with the power to do that. The truth. ❖

Pete Seat, Indystar: Indiana is not gerrymandered.

And that is only the first of the inconvenient truths of redistricting. Once every 10 years, states are required by law to redraw congressional and legislative district boundaries based on the federal government's updated decennial U.S. Census data. The latest effort in Indiana, involving the 2020 census, is still on lawmakers' to-do list. Redistricting: Indiana lawmakers likely to keep drawing maps that critics say amplify their power. In some states the process is conducted by "independent" commissions (if you believe such a thing exists, I will convince you that Nickelback is worth a listen) and in other states, like Indiana, by lawmakers. This option, obviously, results in complaints of partisan manipulation. Voters should pick their representatives, not the other way around, the saying goes. Advocacy organizations such as Common Cause, frequently on the front lines of demanding an "independent" redistricting commission to draw lines, preach this message incessantly but never present evidence to make their case other than what they see as lopsided Republican representation in the Statehouse, based on the party's supermajority in both chambers. To be sure, examples of gerrymandering, where politicians draw oddly shaped district boundaries to maintain or gain political power, are found in many states, with particularly ugly examples in Maryland, Texas and Illinois. But they aren't found in Indiana. Here, gerrymandering is not in the eye of the beholder, but in the eye of the loser. ❖

William Kristol, The Bulwark: There's an interesting piece in Politico today which raises interesting questions. Its headline: "Anti-Trumpers are done with the GOP. Where do they go now?" The subhed: "Scores of Republicans are bolting the party in the wake of the Jan. 6 Capitol riot. But they're discovering there's really no place to go." The piece tracks with a bunch of private and not-so-private conversations I've been involved in, and reveals a real set of questions and conundrums facing anti-Trumpers. But the piece is also revealing in another way: Joe Biden is barely mentioned—his name appears twice, in passing. Similarly, Biden's name is absent from lots of the "Whither Never Trump" conversations I've been privy to. Yes, Joe Biden. Remember him? The current president of the United States; the man who defeated Donald Trump; the man many anti-Trumpers supported; the man whose political future and fate might be thought an important factor in this whole discussion. I suppose that if you're committed to staying in the Republican party and fighting the forces of Trump for control, Joe Biden is kind of irrelevant to your challenges. ❖

FDA approves J&J one-shot vaccine

WASHINGTON — Johnson & Johnson's single-dose vaccine protects against COVID-19, according to an analysis by U.S. regulators Wednesday that sets the stage for a final decision on a new and easier-to-use shot to help tame the pandemic (AP). The Food and Drug Administration's scientists confirmed that overall the vaccine is about 66% effective at preventing moderate to severe COVID-19. The agency also said J&J's shot — one that could help speed vaccinations by requiring just one dose instead of two — is safe to use. That's just one step in the FDA's evaluation of a third vaccine option for the U.S. On Friday, the agency's independent advisers will debate if the evidence is strong enough to recommend the long-anticipated shot. Armed with that advice, FDA is expected to make a final decision within days. The vaccination drive has been slower than hoped, hampered by logistical issues and weather delays even as the country mourns more than 500,000 virus-related deaths. So far, about 65 million Americans have received at least one dose of vaccine made by Pfizer or Moderna, shots that require two doses several weeks apart for full protection.

Republicans rally against relief bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans rallied solidly Wednesday against Democrats' proposed \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill as lawmakers awaited a decision by the Senate's parliamentarian that could bolster or potentially kill a pivotal provision hiking the federal minimum wage. Despite their paper-thin congressional majorities, Democratic leaders were poised to push the sweeping package through the House on Friday. They were hoping the Senate, where changes seem likely, would follow



quickly enough to have legislation on President Joe Biden's desk by mid-March. By late Wednesday, not one Republican in either chamber had publicly said he or she would back the legislation. GOP leaders were honing attacks on the package as a job killer that does too little to reopen schools or businesses shuttered for the pandemic and that was not only wasteful but also even unscrupulous. "I haven't seen a Republican yet that's found something in there that

they agree with," said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "I think all Republicans believe in three simple things: They want a bill that puts us back to work, back to school and back to health. This bill is too costly, too corrupt and too liberal."

\$30M damage after Capitol siege

WASHINGTON — The top operations and maintenance official of the United States Capitol told lawmakers on Wednesday that the costs of the Jan. 6 attack will exceed \$30 million, as his office works to provide mental health services, increase security and repair historical statues and other art damaged in the riot (New York Times). "The events of Jan. 6 were difficult for the American people, and extremely hard for all of us on campus to witness," J. Brett Blanton, the architect of the Capitol, testified as he and other top officials gave their first extensive look at the damage inflicted on the House's fine art collection and the strain on congressional employees from the assault.

NCAA COVID tests won't show on stats

INDIANAPOLIS — When dozens of college basketball teams and their fans travel to Indiana for March Madness in a few weeks, players and coaches will be tested for COVID-19 daily, but those tests will not be reflected in the state's public dashboard (IBJ). The Indiana Department of

Health told IBJ that the state's COVID-19 testing data, which has been updated daily since the pandemic began almost a year ago, only includes information on Indiana residents. And that policy will not be changing when the NCAA's Men's Basketball Tournament brings thousands of out-of-state athletes, journalists, coaches, trainers, family members and fans to Indianapolis, West Lafayette and Bloomington. The tournament begins March 18.

Former trustee admits to theft

PORTLAND, Ind. — A former township trustee in Jay County has admitted to using more than \$86,000 in public funds for personal expenses (Muncie Star Press). Katina Miller — who was trustee in northern Jay County's Bearcreek Township from 2015 through 2018 — on Jan. 21 was indicted on two counts of wire fraud in U.S. District Court in Fort Wayne. The indictment alleged the Bryant resident had used the township's two debit cards. and issued unauthorized checks to herself, for a total of \$86,755.39 used "to pay her own personal, unauthorized charges." The two wire fraud charges said she had used a Bearcreek Township debit card, in December 2015 and January 2016, to make two payments — for \$824 and \$775 — to a Fort Wayne dental office.

Duke shutting down Gallagher plant

NEW ALBANY — Duke Energy is closing its Gallagher power plant earlier than previously announced (News&Tribune). The over 60-year-old coal-fired generating station, which was scheduled to be retired in 2022, will now be retired by June 1, 2021, according to an email from Angeline Protogere, principal communications consultant for Duke Energy. The R. Gallagher power plant, built along the Ohio River in Floyd County, went online in 1958. A second unit began generating electricity in 1959, followed by two more units in 1960 and 1961.