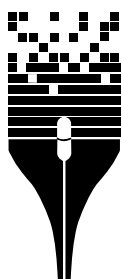


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“QUOTE” OF THE WEEK

“Self-preservation drives about everything in the Statehouse and that determines the maps”

- State Rep. Bruce Munson, to the Muncie Star Press, on redistricting

Coats’ staffers vital at White House

Hoosiers have unparalleled influence

By **MARK SCHOEFF JR.** *in Washington*

Whether President George W. Bush succeeds in his first 100 days may depend in part on a cadre of former aides to retired Indiana Sen. Dan Coats.

The potential influence of the Coats diaspora can be seen in the machinations surrounding Bush's \$1.6 trillion, 10-year tax cut, which faces its biggest challenge in the Senate. As the White House negotiates with Senate leadership, former Coats aides hold key positions. Ziad Ojakli and Townsend Lange McNitt, both former Coats legislative aides, now work in the White House Senate liaison office. David Hoppe and Sharon Soderstrom, chief of staff and deputy chief of staff, respectively, for Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott are former Coats chiefs of staff.

"I talk to them on a daily basis," Soderstrom said of Ojakli and McNitt. "The fact that we trust them implicitly, know them well and have confidence in their abilities makes for a natural relationship right off the bat and has been very helpful. We can kick right into gear rather than developing a new relationship."

While Ojakli and McNitt are helping Bush push his policies through the Senate, other Coats aides are writing the rhetoric he uses to sell his programs and build coalitions he will need to give them momentum. Michael Gerson, former Coats speechwriter and policy director, is Bush's chief speechwriter. Tim Goeglein, who served as Coats' press secretary, is deputy director of the White House Office of Public Liaison.

Although Bush has been criticized for mangling his syntax in unscripted public appearances, his major speeches

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Covering the golden age of Hoosier politics

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GAS PRICES EXPECTED TO RISE SHARPLY SOON: Get ready for a repeat of last summer's record-high gasoline prices, according to Ralph Dobson (Paul Dodson, South Bend Tribune). He is president of B&R Oil, a Granger-based company that distributes Phillips 66 petroleum products and operates service stations. Dobson warned Michiana is facing a repeat of last year's spike in gasoline prices. "We are within 60 days of going through the same thing again," he said. Last summer prices rose by 50 cents to 75 cents per gallon, reaching more than \$2 per gallon in some locales. An ominous sign was the January closing of the Premcor Inc. refinery in Blue Island, Ill. "That took over three million gallons per day out of the system. It's going to be a rerun of last summer," Dobson said.

BORST CALLS BMV BILL A 'POWER GRAB' BY O'BANNON: A key state senator put the brakes Tuesday on legislation that would restructure the state's license branch system when he called the measure a "power grab" by Democratic Gov. Frank O'Bannon (Lesley Stedman, Louisville Courier-Journal). Sen. Larry Borst said House Bill 1170 would put political patronage back into the state's Bureau of Motor Vehicles

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Coats, *from page 1*

- GOP nomination acceptance, inaugural, joint session of Congress - have drawn praise. Gerson is responsible in large part for Bush's oratory success, but, like each of the former Coats staffers, he demurs when given the chance to take credit.

"There's a formal process by which speeches are distributed to the senior staff," said Gerson, 37, who oversees the writing of one to four speeches a day. "They go through a lot of hands. We do a first draft and a lot of people have input."

Gerson, head of the eight-person speechwriting office, said the two years he spent working on the Bush campaign helped him build a relationship with the president that enables him to find the chief executive's voice. "He has developed a style. He has a West Texas directness."

But Gerson doesn't try to oversell his influence. "We all serve at the pleasure of the president," he said.

For Goeglein, 37, coming to work every day is an inspiration. "It is awesome and humbling at exactly the same time," he said. When you walk into the White House, you have this sense that you're walking in the paths of giants."

Part of Goeglein's job is to convince conservative groups that Bush is one of those giants. He is responsible for building support for Bush initiatives among Catholics, evangelicals, other faith-based organizations, veterans and military groups. His issue portfolio ranges from taxes and education to defense and entitlement programs. "The goal is to make sure that a significant portion of the population knows what the president's message is and why it's important that they support the president," he said.

In his position, Goeglein works closely with Bush senior adviser Karl Rove, one of the most powerful members of Bush's inner circle. "On a purely political basis, it is what it must have been like to work for Wellington," Goeglein said. "He's a guy who plays chess on several different levels."

Staff as Legacy

In addition to Gerson, Goeglein, Ojakli and McNitt, Matt Smith, Goeglein's assistant, also worked for Coats. David Crane, a Lott senior policy adviser, joins Hoppe and Soderstrom on the majority leader's staff. Coats is gratified by the depth and breadth of his alumni network.

"When I made the decision to leave the Senate, my main goal was to help my staff not only land in a good spot but in a better spot than where they were," Coats said.

One of the reasons that some of his aides wound up in the White House is because of their connection to a major Coats issue - compassionate conservatism. In 1995, Coats helped introduce the concept through his Project for American Renewal, a 19-point plan that advocated tackling poverty and social problems through local nonprofit and faith-based agencies. The seed that Coats planted blossomed into the "compassionate conservatism" that Bush adopted during his presidential campaign.

"His approach was pioneering and he had a lot of influence," Gerson said of Coats. Goeglein, a Fort Wayne native, said that many Coats aides adopted their boss' approach. "We believe that idea ideas have consequences," he said.

Hoosier Influence

Another former Coats aide, who is now in Congress, said that it is no accident that the Coats diaspora is succeeding. "We hired really sharp people in '89 and '90," said Rep. Mark Souder (R-4th CD), who served as Coats' legislative director and deputy chief of staff. Coats was tapped by then-Gov. Robert Orr in 1988 to fill the Senate seat being vacated by then-Sen. Dan Quayle, who became vice president in the first Bush administration. Coats held Quayle's congressional seat.

Of course, the most significant Hoosier member of the Bush administration is Mitch Daniels, director of the Office of Budget and Management and a former chief of staff for Sen. Richard Lugar. Also on the Indiana team is former Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith, an adviser to Bush on faith-based initiatives.

"I don't know when we've had as many Hoosiers in more important posi-

tions," said Souder. "They have tremendous influence."

Maintaining Bonds

In addition to working together, the former Coats aides maintain personal friendships. Goeglein calls Gerson his best friend. Most of the group celebrate each other's birthdays, stay in touch with Coats, and gather annually with Coats on May 16 to celebrate the senator's birthday.

"There's a lot of interaction that goes beyond the professional side of work," said Coats. "The friendships and working relationships they formed now carry over."

Next step for Coats

Coats has been in the private sector as a lawyer for a major Washington, D.C., firm since leaving Congress in 1999. But he is heading back into public service as the U.S. ambassador to Germany. Although not yet official, Coats said that his nomination is "in process and ought to be announced soon."

He is eager to go to Berlin. "It's an exciting new opportunity for us. It is such a vital post that is first and center for all of Europe," he said. He cited Germany's key role in issues such as NATO enlargement, stability in the Balkans, national missile defense, and trade relations.

Some have suggested that the Bush administration is offering Coats the ambassadorship to salve wounds inflicted when he was publicly passed over for secretary of defense.

Coats doesn't view being ambassador to Germany as a consolation prize. "I hope I was chosen because my background and skills were of value to them," Coats said. "I felt honored I was a finalist for one of the top positions in the administration," he said in reference to being defense secretary. Losing out to the eventual nominee - Donald Rumsfeld - is "sort of like losing the batting title to Ted Williams." ❖

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and give the 1,700 branch employees collective bargaining rights.

BAYH ON TAX CUTS: NBC Meet the Press host Tim Russert said to Indiana Sen. Evan Bayh, "If you don't pay down the debt as quickly as you had planned to and give it in tax cuts, the true cost of the Bush tax plan is \$2.6 trillion. Do you agree with that?" Bayh responded, "Tim, all that is true. And that raises the very important question of having a tax cut all of us who around the table here today support, but having one that reflects all of the American people's values, not just the value of cutting taxes. We need a tax cut that is fiscally responsible. The key word is 'projections.' These are 10-year estimates, and the secretary of the treasury, George Bush's secretary of the treasury, himself, said 10-year estimates aren't worth the paper they're written on. So we ought to proceed in a prudent way, make sure that we balance the budget, can pay down the debt to shore up Social Security, and then reflect our other priorities: education, training. And fairness is important, too, to not have this tax cut skewed toward just one segment of the American taxpaying public."

THREE NEW DEMOCRATIC

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DISTRICT CHAIRS: Indiana Democrats have three new CD chairs. Tim Southworth of Jay County replaces Ray Scheele in the 2nd CD; Brian Nichol of Johnson County replaces Al Rachels in the 6th CD; and Jeff Fites of Hendricks County takes over from Chet Vice in the 7th CD.

MERRILLVILLE CLERGY CALLS CITY COUNCIL RUDE, RANCOROUS: Members of the Merrillville clergy who met last week to question the Town Council's leadership abilities said they could issue a report card on the council's effectiveness within the next few weeks (Carrie Rodovich, Times of Northwest Indiana). Members of 13 congregations met and held a press conference March 2 to voice their concern over the way the Merrillville Town Council was operating. At that meeting, the clergymen said they would pray weekly for the town's leaders, work to build consensus with other town organizations and encourage changes in the way town business was conducted. "The atmosphere of rancor and rudeness must change to one of honest dialogue and cooperation," they said in a statement.

POLL SHOWS AMERICANS SUPPORT BAYH'S TRIGGER: Most Americans approve of last week's vote in the U.S. House of

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Speaker Gregg bluntly talks taxes

INDIANAPOLIS - On the final day of third reading for House bills, HPR's Brian A. Howey was summoned by House Speaker John Gregg to be educated on tax restructuring.

HPR: Are we ever going to see Indiana's tax code restructured?

Gregg: Only when there is true bipartisan support for it and it's true tax restructuring, meaning all the money raised will go to cut taxes. The plans I heard of this shadow government, which I wasn't part of, was a way for Myles Brand and some of the IU people to raise extra revenue for the state universities. That's not tax restructuring, that's a way to increase taxes and get more money for higher ed. But I think until the citizens of Indiana realize that you're only going to be able to cut a tax - and in this case, property tax - is to raise either property or sales or a combinations or you can't do it. I think that message is still not out there. I think it's being sold by legislators. Legislators say it all the time. It's being sold by media people such as you that aren't just newspaper short story writers. I think it's being told by people - Farm Bureau, IMA, ISTA, union halls all across Indiana - where people talk about it. I think some people know it, but it's got to get to a level where more people realize that, hey, the only way is you can't rob Peter to pay Paul. In order to cut one, you have to raise another one. We're not there yet as a state.

HPR: I disagree with you. If the Governor goes out and uses his bully pulpit, which he hasn't used....

Gregg: Well, I disagree with that. The government has used the bully pulpit in ways this time that nobody sees. I think he's been extremely active behind the scenes in this session, more so than any session before. I actually told Jim Maguire the governor, in my opinion, gets and A-plus for this session for his work with the legislature. I've met more with the governor this session and our leader-

ship has more than ever before. We know what they're doing, they know what we're doing. It's great rapport. In fact it's been an enjoyable session because of it. I disagree with him using the bully pulpit on that at this time for a number of reasons. Until we get this manual, there's still no guarantee the 2003 reassessment will go. It could end up in court. Some states have fought over this for years. We're acting like it's 2003 and this could be four or five years beyond that. Let's make sure the wolves are at the door. When I see the wolf, and I'm at the door, would I love to see something done about it? Only if it's real tax restructuring. But you've got some philosophical differences. Is it going to be income? Sales? Because, you know,

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some Democrats do not like sales tax. Some like income. Some talk

graduated income. Same with the Republicans. The thing is, most people don't want to pay more taxes, period. And how can you do it. The biggest hindrance of all is what's going in Washington, D.C. That's a success problem. I'm glad they're talking about cutting taxes at the federal level, but when they're talking about cutting, and then people see in Indiana

HPR: You are worried about the contrast.

Gregg: Well, yeah. It's a huge contrast. Even if it's tax neutral, some are going to go up and some are going to go down and that's a horrible thing to be in. The timing is horrible.

HPR: But it's how you sell it. If you tell people their property taxes will go down if their sales tax goes up a bit

Gregg: That's contrast. We cut taxes in 1995, '97 and '99 and people are always saying their taxes are going up. It's their federal taxes. It's their property

taxes at the local level. There's still a real problem in this tax restructuring we don't even address: What are we going to do with local government to keep them spending within their means? When we are taking more money in, we spend more, and we save more and right now we're still spending more than we're taking in. I don't find local government to have any restraint at all. Let's say once we do restructure, like Dr. Bowen did 30 years ago ...

HPR: Doc Bowen went out and sold his plan during the 1972 campaign. He used the bully pulpit. The people were ready for it.

Gregg: He sold it, but then again over time those caps came off and everybody starting going ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom!

HPR: Bowen's plan stayed within its bounds, what, six years?

Gregg: Yeah. By 1980, it was already taking water real bad. My point is we'll no more than do something to bail out local governments, the mayors, the library boards, the conservation districts, the school boards, the county councils, the county commissioners and, I don't fault these people, but they'll be back saying, "We've got to raise more, we've got to do this and that." I've just seen it in county after county after county where I think county government needs to do more to control their own spending. I mean, they've got a lot of collectability, but every time there's a problem they turn to the legislature to solve it. Yet they say they want total control.

HPR: You say the governor has never been more active. But the *Star's* editorial says nothing is happening; no leadership. The end game: Is that what we should be paying attention to?

Gregg: I saw that. You can't let the *Indianapolis Star* set public policy.

HPR: Isn't that a flaw of nature that journalists just can't run the total show (laughs)?

Gregg: No, I don't think tax

restructuring is going to happen this session. It can't. It truly can't. There's too much going on. The idea the citizens of Indiana aren't ready for it yet, you can have lawsuits drag this thing on forever. There's not even a manual yet. It's got to be sold and you can't really sell it. It's something that maybe you start selling after the session, but it can't be done now.

HPR: Set a scenario for how tax restructuring actually happens?

Gregg: I don't know. I mean, we're not going to restructure this session, we can't.

HPR: Can you do it in a short session? Like 2002?

Gregg: Oh, you could do it in a short session. Yeah, I mean once it's sold to the citizens of Indiana, where we need to restructure, sure it could be done in a short session.

HPR: Sen. Borst thinks reassessment is a ticking time bomb for the Democrats. If you're Joe Kernan, or another gubernatorial contender, don't you want it done now so that its impact is known in 2003 and you can spin it for your maximum benefit in 2004? Aren't you worried about that?

Gregg: You're talking about 2004. There's 2002, 2003. There's two more sessions before you get to 2004. I'm not worried about it. We just can't restructure right now. I don't think you can.

HPR: I guess where I'm coming from is that we watched the governor campaign in 1996 saying he was going to restructure, now we're five years out. Then you see the story about the Internet bleeding revenue. Things are a-changin' pretty dramatically here.

Gregg: The feds are going to allow us to do something with a compact to allow us to start collecting through the Internet. I think that will stop that leak. It's still a year and a half to two years away. I've read things, Brian, five to eight years ago saying that sales tax was going to start dwindling. That time they were

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Representatives to approve President Bush's tax cut plan, but only 41 percent want the Senate to rubber-stamp that proposal. Nearly 60 percent support a "trigger" provision introduced by U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh that would halt tax cuts in the face of a looming federal budget deficit, according to a new CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll released Monday. The poll combines the results of interviews with 1,015 adult Americans between March 9 and 11. The sampling error is plus or minus three percentage points. Senior White House officials and senior senate GOP aides tell CNN that talks of compromise in the Senate focus not on income tax rates or the estate tax but on anti-deficit devices known as "triggers" and "circuit-breakers" even though the President adamantly opposes the triggers. Bush's approve/disapprove rating was at 58/29 percent, compared to 63/22 percent last week.

PROGRAM THAT SUPPLIED GRANT FOR 500 COPS ENDING: Hundreds of Indiana communities are facing the end of a program that helped put more than 500 additional police officers on Indiana streets using state grants (Lesley Stedman, Louisville Courier-Journal). Gov. Frank O'Bannon has asked the General Assembly to

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increase court fees by \$20 to give county sheriffs' departments and city and town police agencies about half the money needed to continue paying for the officers. But so far legislators have not obliged. Because the grants are beginning to expire, local officials are facing decisions about whether to let the officers go or absorb their salaries into city or county budgets. "That's a concern," O'Bannon said. "It's a concern to the local units of government and how they continue to keep the strength in their police force." The Courts and Criminal Code Committee approved the bill, but it foundered in the House Ways and Means Committee, which had to consider it because it involves an appropriation of state money. The bill died when it wasn't approved by last week's deadline for legislation to be approved by the house in which it originated.

BORST TO WRITE BUDGET FIT FOR A HERO: Senate Finance Chairman Larry Borst says the new budget he will craft and present on March 22 likely will leave university officials and the Indiana State Teachers Association grumbling (Mike Smith, Associated Press). With revenues falling far behind projections, Borst said the state

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worried about toll free numbers and faxes. And now, it's the Internet. And I think the criticism of the Governor is unfair. We've been in touch with him more than ever, and that hasn't always been the case.

HPR: Walk me through what we should expect in April? Will the budget and redistricting be coupled?

Gregg: Even if they're not in the same bill, they're coupled. One isn't going to happen without the other. That's a fact. We are not going to pass a budget without passing maps.

HPR: Do you think you can do it without a special session?

Gregg: I'm sure we can. Bob Garton and I get along great. I'm convinced we can get a budget out of here

and the maps. The maps have got very strict federal and constitutional guidelines with the Voting Rights Act. We followed them in 1991 and we'll following them this time.

HPR: What do you think Sen. Borst is going to do with the budget?

Gregg: I don't know. Put his stamp on it. Pat (Bauer) and Larry will work something out, and hopefully that will be for the betterment of all citizens.

HPR: Anything surprise you about this session so far?

Gregg: No. It's been a good session. It has gone smooth. That means a lot for the members. It keeps the members calm and that's to the credit of the Republicans, Democrats and the Governor.



PERHAPS... W E W A N D E R

By Brian Howey

2000 Census documents Indiana's changing face

INDIANAPOLIS - Indiana has become a more populous state in the 1990s with 6,080,485 residents, and a browner state, with its Hispanic population rising by 117 percent.

That's a change from a description in the *Almanac for American Politics* that noted that places such as Indianapolis and the state as a whole lacked the "yeasty ethnic" diversity of many other large Midwestern cities.

It is becoming a more Republican state in key places such as central and south Lake County, and in places such as Lawrenceburg and Rising Sun, and the collar counties around Indianapolis.

There are some ominous signs. The state's heavy manufacturing centers - Hammond, East Chicago, Gary, Whiting, Muncie, Anderson, Marion, Richmond,

Evansville and New Castle - are losing population.

Gary's population dropped by 12 percent, from 116,000 in 1990 to 103,000 in the 2000 Census. Hammond lost 1,200 people, which was considered a bit of a victory as earlier projections had placed it at 5,000. Evansville continued a four-decade trend by losing 4 percent of its population since 1990. It has gone from 141,543 in 1960 to 121,582 in 2000. Muncie lost 5 percent.

There have been some bright spots. Out of 29 Southern Indiana cities and towns, only six lost population. Columbus, Jeffersonville, Bloomington and North Vernon all posted at least 20 percent population gains.

South Bend reversed a four-decade population spiral, increasing from 105,000 people in 1990 to 107,789 in 2000. Mishawaka grew 9.3 percent from 42,608 to 46,557, and Elkhart was up 19 percent,

from 43,627 in 1990 to 51,874.

Fort Wayne saw its population increase from 173,072 to 205,727, mostly due to former Mayor Paul Helmke's aggressive annexation policies. Its Hispanic population increased 154 percent to 11,884.

While Indiana is more ethnically diversified, it is still a largely segregated state. The *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* observed, "While Fort Wayne has become a more diverse city, where nearly one in four residents is a minority, it is still largely segregated along racial and ethnic lines."

There are other pockets of ethnic diversification. Ligonier, Wolf Lake and Columbia City now have minority populations of more than 10 percent. Hamilton County has seen its African-American population increase 88 percent and its Hispanics increase by 149 percent.

What's it mean, politically?

Indiana's new Congressional districts - at 675,609 people - will be among the most populated in the nation and 22 percent more than the districts hatched in 1990. Only U.S. Rep. Dan Burton's 6th CD will actually have to shed people.

As HPR reported prior to the Census data arrival, Indiana Democrats are going to see three of their Congressional incumbents running in more difficult districts. U.S. Rep. Julia Carson's 10th CD must take on 125,000 new residents - most in Republican-oriented Marion County townships. No matter how it's cut, Carson is going to be in for a couple of tough races before further Republican migration will make the outer fringes of Indianapolis more Democratic than GOP.

U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky has been used to getting 57-percent victories against under-funded and credibility challenged GOP candidates. That is about to change. About half of the migrating Chicago people arriving in central and

southern Lake and Porter counties are Republican. Democratic map makers are going to be hard-pressed to shore him up.

U.S. Rep. Baron Hill's 9th CD is going to need to take in 53,000 more people, and it is hard to see what current adjacent Democratic areas are going to be available. One might be Bloomington, which has pockets of Democratic strength. But those precincts will be coveted by Democrats in the new 8th CD, which national Democrats see as a potential pickup in their fight to retake the U.S. House.

While Republicans such as Chris Chocola are pressing to keep "communities of interest" such as South Bend, Mishawaka and Elkhart in the same CD, there are some legislators pushing for a scrambling of the maps, giving areas such as South Bend/Elkhart and Fort Wayne two congressmen. Indianapolis could find itself with three members of Congress, as opposed to the current two.

Maps by April

State Rep. Ed Mahern, who is heading up the map making efforts in the Indiana House, expects to have the first round of new districts drawn up by early to mid April.

While most of the speculation has been focused on Congressional map-making and its bearing nationally, Mahern is going to have his work cut out for him in drawing up Indiana House maps, which each must have 60,800 voters (Indiana Senate maps will have 121,600 voters). Areas such as Indianapolis (Marion County had only a 1.7 percent increase) and northern Lake County are going to have to shed Democratic seats, while significantly more representation will be steered into suburban Republican areas such as Hamilton (58 percent increase), Hancock (22 percent), Hendricks (30 percent), Johnson (28 percent) and southern Lake County. ❖

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cannot afford increases of 4 percent for schools and 3.8 percent for public colleges and universities as proposed by the House. "As I told my guys, 'You're going to look pretty bad and everybody's going to boo you.

Universities are going to be upset, the ISTA is going to be upset, but in the long run, it (budget plan) will make a hero out of you,'" Borst said. Heroes, he said, because the leaner spending plan will be one the state can afford in the long run. "It's a bill that can go to the governor's office and we can live with it," he said. "It will be positioned so that two years from now, whoever writes the budget can write a budget - if the economy doesn't go down too far - and not have to raise taxes to do it."

INDIANA JOBLESS RATE RISES TO 3.7 PERCENT: Indiana's jobless rate in January rose to 3.7 percent from 2.7 percent in December. Hoosiers continued to have a better employment picture than surrounding states: Illinois, 5.4 percent; Ohio, 4.8 percent; Kentucky, 4.8 percent; and Michigan, 5.2 percent. "Even though we have seen a slight increase in our unemployment rate, it is lower than it was a year ago," said Craig E. Hartzler, commissioner for the workforce development department. "The manufacturing and construction sec-

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tors of our economy, however, have experienced a slowdown similar to that of the nation's economy" (Brian Werth, Bloomington Herald-Times).

FBI BEGINS CORRUPTION PROBE IN GARY: The FBI has begun an investigation into Gary's city motor pool just as Mayor Scott King's own internal review into possible misuse of city gasoline reserves is winding up (Bill Dolan, Times of Northwest Indiana). Federal agents seized motor pool records last Wednesday under a subpoena. U.S. Attorney David Capp, who said last month his office is conducting a number of public corruption investigations, declined comment on the subpoena.

BUSH MOVES TO PROTECT STEEL INDUSTRY: The Bush administration said Wednesday it is considering broad import protection for the nation's beleaguered steel industry (Associated Press). U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick told the House Ways and Means Committee the administration was looking "very seriously" at employing a rarely used trade tool that would allow erection of such curbs on foreign steel as higher border tariffs, quotas and direct government aid to the domestic industry. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Ind., said "Consideration isn't enough. Every day counts." ❖

COLUMNISTS ON INDIANA

Larry Lough, Muncie Star Press - Part of our job is to get information that people don't want us to have. We don't seek it just because someone says we can't have it, though that does add some challenge to the task. But usually we doggedly pursue information because we're supposed to. That's part of our social contract under the First Amendment. The Bill of Rights gives the press broad freedom against infringement by government, and our part of the deal is to keep an eye on government to make sure the public is getting the truth. Which is why we want autopsy photos of NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt. And medical records of Vice President Richard Cheney. And the e-mails of Indiana legislators. And even the bids of two companies that want the management contract with the local bus system. These are not matters of the privacy of individuals and companies. These are matters of government that the public (and the press) has the right to know about and question. When government says "trust us," we become especially skeptical. ❖

Jack Colwell, South Bend Tribune - Harry Truman is recorded as asking his White House staff to bring him a one-armed economist. Truman's point: He was tired of economists hedging their forecasts by saying, "Well, on the one hand . . . but on the other hand." Economic projections, while needed for planning in government and business, often aren't as solid as a rock. Maybe sometimes more like Silly Putty. That's why there's a lot of concern in Congress over George W. Bush's don't-worry-be-happy forecast that the federal surplus will just keep growing, permitting his \$1.6 trillion tax cut over 10 years to occur without any lapse in paying down the national debt. Wait, say people such as the congressmen from Michiana, Democrat Tim Roemer and Republican

Fred Upton, and other centrists as well. What if all those surpluses year after year don't reach the moon or whatever the latest lofty projection suggests? Bayh cites errors in past economic projections. He notes that the 1995 Congressional Budget Office projection missed the mark in calculating the surplus-deficit situation for 2000. It missed by \$578 billion. Trigger supporters stress that they also want a tax cut now. Bayh would support even more of a cut than Bush calls for at the start. In the future, they fear, economic forecasts will prove to have been flawed. And with tax cuts in law solid as a rock, the promises to pay off the national debt could be just Silly Putty. Harry Truman couldn't find a one-armed economist with sure-fire forecasts. Neither will George Bush. ❖

Mike Leonard, Bloomington Herald-Times - Legislators took on the responsibility of narrowing the entertainment options of juveniles by passing a bill to prohibit youths from playing violent video games in public arcades without adult supervision. The Legislature voted overwhelmingly to increase penalties to make dog owners responsible for the violent actions of their canines. And the House shot down in flames a bill that would make it a crime for adults to knowingly, intentionally or recklessly store a loaded handgun in a place they should reasonably know an unsupervised child could get it. Does anyone else see a dramatic inconsistency here? ❖

Gary Gerard, Warsaw Times-Union - I have one question for people who think that way. Was it deficit taxing that got us into budget trouble in the '80s or was it deficit spending? ❖