



HOWEY

Political Report

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Retirement wave subdued; but the locals are coming

Legislators will face tests from mayors, local officials

By BRIAN A. HOWEY in Indianapolis

About that wave of retirements predicted after the legislator health care for life issue surfaced?

It didn't happen. Only State Rep. David Yount retired, and that was for business reasons. Only Democratic State Reps. John Aguilera of East Chicago and octogenarian Ben GiaQuinta of Fort Wayne, Sheila Klinker of Lafayette, Jeff Espich of Uniondale were unfilled at today's deadline. Party sources tell HPR that Espich and Klinker are expected to run for another term. Alicia Lopez-Rodriguez has filed for Aguilera's HD12 seat. She lost to Aguilera by a narrow margin in 2004. No Democrat has filed for the GiaQuinta seat, though sons Phil and Mark, a former Fort Wayne Councilman, could be expected to run if the incumbent decides to retire. Republican Kevin Howell has filed for HD80.



State Rep. Jackie Walorski (right) will face former senator and Mishawaka Mayor Bob Kovach in November. (HPR Photo)

But there are 26 primaries involving legislative districts, and 20 involve challenges to incumbents.

Most, like those facing State Reps. William Crawford, Charlie Brown, Phyllis Pond, Ed Mahern, Earl Harris, Mae Dickinson, Billy Bright, Ralph Foley and Matt Whetstone are more of an irritant than a credible challenge.

But primary races involving State Sens. Allen Paul and State Reps. Mary Kay Budak, Rich McClain, Linda Lawson and Woody Burton are considered credible. Of that group, only Budak and Lawson are considered to be particularly vulnerable. Budak is facing LaPorte school board member Tom Dermody. Budak claims she will get a gubernatorial endorsement, but Gov. Mitch Daniels' office will not comment.

Rep. Lawson fended off a primary challenge in 2002 from Kathleen Pucalik



“And so here we are in the White House, Jerry, honoring the great Chicago White Sox. I'm proud to be with you. God bless your championship.”

— President Bush, honoring the 2005 World Series champions, last Monday

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and supported by Hammond Mayor Tom McDermott, but she survived. This time, she faces Lake County Councilman Ron Tabacynski, who is seeking to regain his seat.

Both the Budak and Lawson races are rated "Tossups" by HPR.

The other big story we've been watching involves local elected officials taking on legislators. State Rep. Woody Burton is facing Johnson County Council President Ron West and McClain will defend his seat against Cass County Commissioner Rick Eller. State Sen. Allen Paul is being challenged by Richmond City Council President Bruce Wissel. While all these races will be worth considerable scrutiny, we believe the incumbents are favored. Having said that, there are some significant wild cards that could come into play, including the switch to Daylight Saving time in April and an expected spike in property taxes, with some increases coming for homeowners in early May.

In the fall, eight current or former local officials are lined up against incumbents that include Sens. Garton (former Columbus city attorney Terry Coriden and Waterman (Vincennes City Councilman Steve Thais), and Reps. Dave Crooks (Washington school board trustee Ron Arnold), Steve Heim (former Knox mayor and senator Nancy Dembowski), Jackie Walorski (former Mishawaka mayor Bob Kovach), Tim Harris (Blackford County Commissioner Larry Hile), and Budak, if she survives (LaPorte Councilman Andrea Renner).

While these challenges from local officials are more than in ordinary years, they fell short of what might have been, given the frustration many mayors, county commissioners and council members were feeling about local control. After the 2005 budget was passed, many local official chafed at House Republicans lauding no tax increases while many were forced to raise local taxes or cut programs.

The Indiana Association of Cities and Towns initiated the "Hometown Matters" tax plan, which has hit the legislature with a resounding thud.

Republicans in both houses are ardently subverting bills that would allow greater flexibility in consolidation.

"They are protecting their friends in township government," Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson charged while lunching with members of the media today. He predicted a wave of fire budget increases and property tax hikes as the result of the inaction.

The new wrinkle in the Friday noon filing deadline is that candidates will have until next Tuesday to officially withdraw. Both parties will have the option of recruiting candidates and filing them this summer.

At the Congressional level, none of the incumbents is expected to have primary nomination problems. Challengers Baron Hill, Brad Ellsworth and Joe Donnelly are expected to easily win nominations. ❖

SD41 Horse Race



Sen. Garton (right) laughs as Sen. Luke Kenley defends the legislator health care package. (HPR Photo by Brian A. Howey)

Senate District 41: Republican: Senate President Pro Tempore Robert D. Garton, Greg Walker. Democrat: Terry Coriden. **1998 Results:** Garton 26,499. **2002 Results:** Garton 21,918 , Gividen (L) 3,350 . **2006 Forecast:** On Wednesday morning when he was asked about whether he would file for re-election, Sen. Garton said, "We'll find out." A little more than 24 hours later, he was in, and one of the most intriguing legislative campaign sequences was, enjoined. Garton filed for office at 1:15 p.m. today. It came less than 24 hours after he scaled back some of the lifetime health insurance programs that ignited considerable controversy. In doing so, he refused to reveal actuarial data about the program's initial costs. It followed a week-end in which Garton received some terrible press coverage (Brian Howey and Matthew Tully columns; Monday *Star* editorial). Garton opponent Terry Coriden has said he will raise health care issues in his fall campaign. Walker told HPR that he was urged to get in the race by national and state Right to Life activists, though former senator Dick Thompson told HPR today that Indiana Right to Life would not get involved. If Walker plays to the RTL constituency and damages the incumbent, that could impact the fall race. Garton is a master politician when it comes to inside the Statehouse intrigue. But he hasn't been seriously challenged since 1994 when he won easily with a huge GOP wave behind him. This time, speculation is that the wave will be going in the Democrats' direction and a couple of loaded issues - health care and property taxes - could be dangerous. After Garton's "we'll find out" quip, he laughed and suggested that some in the media wanted to see him retire. To the contrary, senator, this should be a fascinating sequence. He enters the primary as a prohibitive favorite.

Primary Status: LIKELY GARTON. **General Status:** LEANS GARTON. ❖



Retirement Watch List (Unfiled House incumbents)

Aguilera, Espich, GiaQuinta, Klinker, (as of Feb. 16). **Expected to Retire:** State Rep. David Yount .

Contested Legislative Primaries

Democratic

- HD 1:** State Rep. Linda Lawson vs. Lake County Councilman Ron Tabacynski.
- HD3:** State Rep. Charlie Brown vs. Herb Smith Jr.
- HD 2:** State Rep. Earl Harris vs. Drake Morris.
- HD8:** State Rep. Ryan Dvorak vs. Roseland Council President Dorothy Snyder.
- HD22:** Allen Lee Dunnagan vs. Larry Rensberger
- HD39:** Savail Majid vs. Rusty Skoog.
- HD 71:** State Rep. Carlene Bottorff vs. Steven Stemler.
- HD87:** Todd DeGroff vs. Leona Glazebrooks
- HD95:** State Rep. Mae Dickinson vs. Lewis Peterson.
- HD97:** State Rep. Ed Mahern vs. Tyler H. Grough
- HD98:** State Rep. William Crawford vs. Edwin Lews Jones Sr.

Republican

- HD19:** Eric Hammond vs. T.J. Wigmore.
- HD 20:** State Rep. Mary Kay Budak vs. LaPorte School Trustee Tom Dermody.
- HD24:** State Rep. Rich McClain vs. Cass County Commissioner Rick Eller.
- HD40:** State Rep. Matt Whetstone vs. Jon Marquess.
- HD47:** State Rep. Ralph Foley vs. Brenda Buster.
- HD55:** Union County Councilman Tom Knollman vs. T. Scott Bevington.
- HD57:** Shelbyville Councilman Rob Nolley vs. Shelby County Councilman Sean Eberhart, Karen Frazier, Marvin Pavlov.
- HD58:** State Rep. Woody Burton vs. Johnson County Council President Ron West.
- HD69:** State Rep. Billy Bright vs. Brent Mullikin.
- HD85:** State Rep. Phyllis Pond vs. Denny Worman
- HD90:** State Rep. Mike Murphy vs. Brian Canter.
- HD89:** State Rep. Larry Buell vs. Michael Batz
- SD6:** State Sen. Sue Landske vs. Crystal Hall.
- SD27:** State Sen. Allen Paul vs. Richmond City Council President Bruce Wissel.
- SD41:** Senate President Pro Tempore Robert D. Garton vs. Greg Walker.



State Rep. Budak (left) has both primary and general election foes. State Rep. Larry Buell (right) may have dodged a bullet. (HPR Photo)

General Election Races with local officials

- HD13:** State Rep. Don Lehe vs. Newton County Sheriff Myron Sutton.
- HD17:** State Rep. Steve Heim vs. former senator and Knox mayor Nancy Dembowski.
- HD21:** State Rep. Jackie Walorski vs. former Mishawaka mayor Bob Kovach.
- HD20:** State Rep. Mary Kay Budak or LaPorte School trustee Tom Dermody vs. LaPorte City Councilwoman Andrea Renner
- HD 31:** State Rep. Tim Harris (R) vs. Blackford County Commissioner Larry Hile (D)
- HD63:** State Rep. Dave Crooks (D) vs. Washington School Trustee Ron Arnold (R).
- SD39:** State Sen. John Waterman (R) vs. Vincennes Councilman Steve Thais (D).
- SD41:** Senate President Pro Tempore Robert D. Garton vs. former Columbus City Attorney Terry Coriden





Governor hits the road

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

Gov. Mitch Daniels is taking his show on the road for the fourth consecutive year. In 2003 and 2004, it was all about capturing the governorship.

In 2005, he toured the doughnut counties around Indianapolis and successfully sold tax increases in seven of the eight very Republican counties for the Colts stadium.

Now, it's all about Major Moves.

"This is not an opportunity we should pass up," Daniels told a packed crowd in Angola (*Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*). With the opening question, a bearded John Hughes told Daniels that he opposed the plan, as did most of the county.

"You rammed it down our throats just like Daylight-saving time," Hughes said.

The *Journal Gazette* reported: When Hughes told Daniels he looked forward to voting against him in 2008, he was met with applause. But when he called the governor a "dictator," the majority of the crowd disagreed and seemed to shift support to Daniels.

Next was a trip to Elkhart City Hall and another packed chamber.

The *Elkhart Truth* reported in its lead paragraph: Without the broad transportation-funding plan that includes leasing the Indiana Toll Road, the state would have to nix long-promised highway projects such as U.S. 31, Gov. Mitch Daniels said Wednesday.

"If nothing else, this is entirely motivated to build a better future," Daniels said of the proposal, which awaits review by a Senate committee after narrowly passing the House this month. "I don't think I'll ever have a chance to bring you an(other) idea this positive."

He spoke to dozens of critics and supporters of the plan during the two-hour meeting at Elkhart City Hall. The standing-room-only crowd, which included several local and state lawmakers, appeared to exceed the 100-person maximum occupancy posted on a sign outside the meeting room.

Sleeves rolled up on his forearms, Daniels stood at the front of the room and answered questions about the toll road proposal -- a controversial measure that has become a focal point of the General Assembly's short session.

He framed the venture as an alternative to cutting road projects or raising the fuel tax, a traditional way of generating money for highway construction.

"U.S. 31 would have been one of the first (projects) to go," he said of upgrading the road from South Bend to



Gov. Daniels

Indianapolis, which could begin as soon as 2008. "Close to \$1 billion ... we wouldn't have been able to do it."

During the meeting, some speakers applauded the windfall the lease deal could bring for road projects statewide, while others voiced concern about the possibility of outsiders managing the highway.

"It is your road. I don't begrudge anybody for having that point of view," the governor said.

Most questions raised Wednesday, while skeptical, seemed to indicate an appreciation of Daniels' willingness to come out into the communities and discuss the matter.

In answering a variety of questions, Daniels said that unlike government, a private company would be able to secure other capital for necessary improvements to the Toll Road, and would have a great deal of motivation to see the venture succeed.

"They are taking the risks, not us," Daniels said. "The No. 1 assurance is that they would do what they need to do to make it succeed."

The *Truth* reported: Several residents said they had shed their initial skepticism of the toll road proposal and now favor it. Only a few openly criticized the Republican governor, with one man dubbing Daniels' plan "Major Mistakes."

At the Elkhart meeting, Daniels said he was unfazed by comments that call his transportation plan hazardous to the political careers of the governor and lawmakers who support it. "You may be right about your political analysis," Daniels told one of his critics, "but that's not that important to me right now. We're here to try to do what's best for the state."

The governor continues the tour on Friday with an 8 a.m. stop in Crown Point followed by a noon event in LaPorte. Key lawmakers said it is critical for Daniels to make the sales pitch.

"The key will be for the governor and elected officials to communicate adequately the tremendous opportunity the initiative brings to the table," House Speaker Brian Bosma told HPR. State Sen. Marvin Riegsecker, R-Goshen, told HPR, "He has to get out and sell it."

The political stakes are high. If Daniels fails to pass Major Moves, it would be a crippling blow to his governorship, and should Republicans lose the House this fall, could find the legislative environment hostile. Already, political opposition is mounting. Former Mishawaka Mayor Bob Kovach is challenging State Rep. Jackie Walorski, R-Lakeville.

Walorski represents a 56 percent GOP district. Kovach, said St. Joseph County Chairman Butch Morgan, "became increasingly upset over the last couple of weeks over a lack of respect for St. Joseph County." That includes the county's lack of inclusion in an eastern RDA plan. ❖



Bosma surveys roads, health, taxes

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS - HPR sat down with House Speaker Brian Bosma on Monday to survey the session.

HPR: What are your members hearing on the legislator health insurance issue when they go back to their Third House meetings?

Bosma: A lot of Hoosiers are aware of the prior health care program in the House because of the strong media attention to the issue. House Republicans took the lead on bringing that program to an end.

HPR: The word is that if Democrats regain control, Rep. Bauer is telling his members he will reinstitute the program. Have you heard this?

Bosma: I have. I probably shouldn't even answer that. I have had people tell me that. I have made clear to those who have mentioned it to me, under no circumstances would I allow a change in that program go unchallenged, either from the minority or the majority. This program was put in place in an unusual fashion and I don't think it should ever be quietly placed on the books again. If there was a change, I would insist it be an open process.

HPR: This thing came in under the radar, yet Sen. Garton insists there were public hearings.

Bosma: I understand how and why the program was put into place. The program itself isn't necessarily wrong. The election that was made by a prior speaker that placed retired legislators in a better position than current serving legislators was way out of line. The fact that legislators were not required to participate in the Medicare program like virtually every other American was way out of line. Those were the primary portions of the program that were just beyond the pale of anything reasonable. I felt the only way to counter that was to go in the exact opposite direction and just remove the subsidy for retirees altogether.

HPR: Have you heard any actuarial data that pegs the unfunded costs to taxpayers?

Bosma: The data that I've seen is all preliminary. From my perspective, it was unreliable. None of the figures that were discussed were anywhere near the figures that were bandied about in the media for awhile. Regardless of the fiscal impact to the state, it was really an issue of fairness.

HPR: Do you believe this situation might prompt the legislature to address affordable health insurance for everyone?

Bosma: Affordable health care is one of the toughest issues we deal with in the General Assembly. The solutions are not readily obvious. Many companies and corporations around the country are looking at this issue and making tough decisions with regard to retirees and current employees. So it didn't make me feel very good that the legislators weren't going through this. Now we're with the majority of Hoosiers.

HPR: Is this something the state can address, or is it more of a national issue?

Bosma: It really is more of a national issue. A national problem, a national crisis. There are things the state can address to ease the burden for small business people.

HPR: Jackie Walorski had a tough town hall meeting in Lakeville and is now facing Bob Kovach. How do you think she did?

Bosma: She did a very good job of cutting through the rhetoric of the opposition. Jackie, Tim Neese, Marlin Stutzman, many of the others who represent the corridor counties are telling me that once people hear the story and get the commonly asked questions answered, the opposition that is so easily drummed up at this point melts away. The key will be for the governor and elected officials to communicate adequately the tremendous opportunity the initiative brings to the table.

HPR: Sens. Meeks and Kenley are making changes in the Senate, particularly the toll moratorium for commuters. Will that endanger passage in the House?

Bosma: We'll deal with the changes and the ideas and changes and try to craft a consensus bill that gives the benefits of the program, addresses the questions raised in both the Senate and the House.

HPR: The Senate also took swipes at the property tax bill in the House,

Bosma: We'll continue to work with the Senate to provide property tax relief for homeowners this session. It's critical for the state and every taxpayer. The bill deserved a few swipes with the symbolic vote to do away with property taxes. But the core of the bill, to capture the growth in welfare was good public policy.

HPR: What can Hoosier taxpayers expect if nothing happens this session?

Bosma: The changes that will occur without action will be more than any of us would like to see. So we're going to work hard to make sure we have some consensus before we leave the building. ❖





Bayh sketches foreign policy

Willingness to take on issue praised, some policy details questioned

By MARK SCHOEFF JR.

The Howey Political Report

WASHINGTON--Sen. Evan Bayh's efforts to sketch a new Democratic approach to foreign policy--and carve a niche for his likely presidential campaign--have received political praise but some policy skepticism.

In a speech at a Washington think tank earlier this month, Bayh outlined what he termed a "tough and smart"

strategy that counters chief White House political adviser Karl Rove's call for Republicans to make national security the central theme of the 2006 elections.

"You have thrown down the gauntlet, and I will pick it up," Bayh said rhetorically to Rove. He went on to castigate the Bush administration for ignoring threats from North Korea and Iran while conducting the Iraq war with "stunning incompetence." He advocated placing immediate comprehensive sanctions on Iran to halt the country's nuclear ambitions and recommended increasing the U.S. Army by 100,000 troops.

A prominent Hoosier Democrat agrees with Bayh's thrust. "Democrats cannot run from national security, we must run because of national security," said former Rep. Tim Roemer, who served on the 9/11 Commission and is now president of the Center for National Policy. "We need to make sure Americans can feel safe and secure with a Democrat talking about national security."

It is imperative for Democrats to go beyond domestic policy, said one expert. "Democrats, if they want to play in the presidential game, have to play in the national security arena," said Ivo Daalder, a former National Security Council official in the Clinton administration and now a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "You can't win in presidential politics if you have only half a policy."

For the Democrats to take back the House and Senate this year and the White House in 2008, they have to make the case that President Bush was misguided in emphasizing Iraq, Roemer said. The administration has "oversimplified the importance of Iraq in the war on jihadism. Iraq is part of the answer but not the primary answer or the only priority."

Roemer cites three crucial national security areas--transforming the military to fight terrorism, protecting the U.S.

homeland and winning the hearts and minds of Muslims worldwide. "I don't think the administration has articulated in post-9/11 terms how we win in those areas," he said.

A muscular approach to Iran

One area Bayh is emphasizing is policy toward Iran. Warning that the country could be within months of producing a nuclear weapon, he introduced a Senate resolution in January calling on the United States to work with the United Nations Security Council immediately to enact aggressive economic, political and diplomatic sanctions on Iran.

Critics say the measure, which has not yet received consideration on the Senate floor, truncates diplomacy. Bayh counters that Iran will only change its behavior if it feels threatened by tough action.

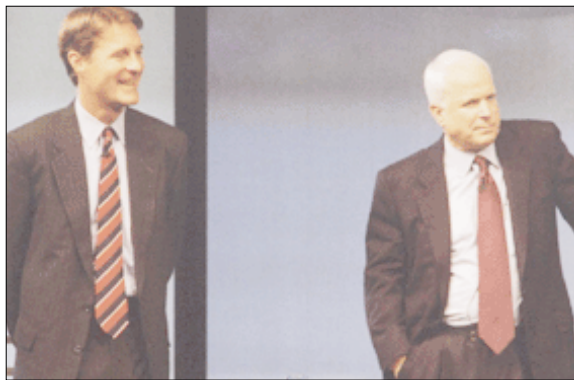
In the meantime, the Senate did pass an Iran resolution unanimously on Jan. 27 that condemned Iran for failing to comply with nuclear nonproliferation obligations, praised European Union efforts to halt Iran's uranium enrichment efforts and called on the International Atomic Energy Agency to report Iran to the UN National Security Council. The IAEA did so at a meeting earlier this month.

The successful Senate resolution was written by Sen. Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It didn't mention sanctions, which the Bush administration is avoiding while it works with the EU to put diplomatic pressure on Iran. A potential wildcard in the standoff is whether Iran will retaliate by cutting off its vast oil supplies to the world market.

The United States over the years already has put several strictures on Iran. Daalder said the Bush administration is proceeding toward further Iran sanctions about as well as it can. "I'm not sure how you get to sanctions other than the way the administration has done at the moment, which is through the IAEA board and the National Security Council," he said.

Foreign Policy Political Points Whether he scores policy points on national security may not matter as much to Bayh as achieving political traction with it. There seems to be general agreement that his speech garnered notice in Democratic circles.

"It was the first time in this campaign I've seen a sound bite on the evening news from Evan Bayh that generated the reaction: 'This was a really nice hit by him'," said Chris Sautter, a Washington political consultant who is originally from Indiana and has worked Hoosier races for more than 20



U.S. Sens. Evan Bayh and John McCain. The Arizona Republican led a recent New Hampshire poll, while Bayh polled 1 percent. (HPR Photo)



years.

Sautter, a veteran of two presidential campaigns, said Bayh's tough-and-smart formulation is a "memorable phrase. It takes a lot of those to elevate your candidacy to the point where you're a real contender."

Bayh has vowed to take his national security message on the road this year to help Democrats win seats in November. Two of the most competitive are in southern Indiana. Sautter recommends that Bayh put a lot of resources into his party's effort to defeat incumbent Republicans John Hostettler in the 8th CD and Mike Sodrel in the 9th CD.

"If we don't win the 8th and 9th, it's inevitable that people will question whether he's effective," Sautter said of Bayh's ability to carry a "red" state. "People are going to say 'prove it.'"

Little support in New Hampshire Democratic poll

New Hampshire voters have heard a version of Bayh's tough talk previously. Speaking before 600 of the state's influential Democrats at a fundraiser in Manchester last October, he slammed the White House on North Korea and military deployment, according to the Concord Monitor. Apparently, the crowd was not swayed - the Monitor of Feb. 12th reported that the Hoosier senator polled just one percent among persons likely to vote in that state's Democratic primary, finishing well behind Hillary Clinton (32 percent) and undecided (31), and trailing John Edwards (9) and John Kerry and Wesley Clark (7 each).

Testing The Waters In Iowa

Perhaps Bayh will make a better impression in Iowa,

where he spent the first part of this week on the hustings. According to news reports, his "presidential exploratory campaign" visited Cedar Rapids for a speech and breakfast, Iowa City for a meeting with local leaders, Ottumwa for a fundraiser and Des Moines to meet with Democrats in the state legislature (*Louisville Courier-Journal*).

He made a bit of a splash in Des Moines when he pledged to support Iowa's Democratic state lawmakers in the fall campaign to help them regain control of the state Legislature, according to Mike Glover of the Associated Press. "I wanted to establish a strong partnership," Bayh told Glover. "If we're going to have a strong national Democratic Party it's got to start at the grassroots level, in Statehouses, in the city halls, in the county courthouses."

Bayh's leadership PAC spending: Stingy or shrewd?

A Feb. 14th article distributed by Bloomberg provided an analysis of recent Federal Election Commission filings that indicate Bayh's leadership PAC - All America PAC - is ranked sixth in Congress, noting that he has given only 4.8 percent in support of other federal candidates and committees, compared with an average of 22 percent for the top 25 PACs. Bayh fared better than Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, who gave 1.8 percent.

Watchdog groups are calling for tighter regulations for all lawmakers' leadership PACs, in part because they have multiplied - more than 40 percent of the members of Congress now have them - and because some have veered from their original purpose of contributing to other candidates, according to the news account. - *Mark Curry* ❖

Roemer stumps for Ellsworth

By BRIAN A. HOWEY

TERRE HAUTE - Former Indiana congressman and 9/11 Commissioner Tim Roemer conducted a town hall meeting with 8th CD candidate Brad Ellsworth and gave Congress a failing grade for improving national security.

"We made 41 recommendations," Roemer said of the 9/11 Commission. "Half of them passed Congress." He said that of the measures, an analysis showed 12 were D's, five were F's and the rest were incompletes.

"If my children brought home report cards like this, they'd be repeating," Roemer said. "We must do better."

He said that the Department of Homeland Security's handling of Hurricane Katrina should be another wake up call for Americans.

"The biggest problem for first responders is communication." He noted that on Sept. 11, those outside the World



Sheriff Brad Ellsworth (right) and former 911 Commissioner Tim Roemer. (HPR Photo)

Trade Center couldn't talk to firefighters inside. He said the same thing happened on the Gulf Coast with helicopter rescuers not having the proper equipment to radio authorities on the ground. "That's making us unsafe." And he scoffed at a \$50,000 offer from Bangladesh to help New Orleans rebuild. "Bangladesh!" Roemer said in amazement.

Ellsworth, the Vanderburgh County sheriff, said he has gotten federal training money, but really needs radios.

Roemer appealed to the 60 people in the room on Ellsworth's behalf. "Help this guy," he said. ❖

**Leslie Stedman Weidenbener**, *Louisville*

Courier-Journal - It seems as if Gov. Mitch Daniels' plan to lease the Indiana Toll Road probably is gaining enough steam to pass before the session ends in mid-March. That \$3.85 billion bid -- money that will largely be used to pay for other highway projects including the Ohio River bridges at Louisville -- is just too good for many lawmakers to pass up. Sure. There are some questions, even among Daniels' fellow Republicans who control the House and Senate. The House passed the bill that authorizes the deal only after adding some additional benefits for legislative districts near the toll road. And although state senators had some questions during their initial review of the proposal, the Republicans seemed fairly content with it. The big question, though, is whether the General Assembly also will grant the governor broad authority to strike similar deals and other public-private partnerships for road projects in the future. ❖

Walter Shapiro, *Salon* - Indiana Democrat Evan

Bayh was well aware of just who was at a neighboring table in the Senate dining room last Thursday as he tried to explain why he advocates force as a last resort to halt the Iranian nuclear program. In the corner was John McCain, a hard-liner on Tehran who has taken the lead in stressing that "the military option cannot be taken off the table." Both senators are probable presidential contenders (McCain the favorite in the Republican winter book and Bayh one of several centrist Democrats vying to become the pragmatic alternative to Hillary Clinton). And it does not take much of a leap to imagine Bayh and McCain sounding similar refrains in the New Hampshire primary as Iran replaces Iraq as the dominant foreign-policy issue of the 2008 campaign. McCain's no-nukes-nohow position flows naturally from his promise of "rogue-state rollback" in his 2000 race for the White House. But Bayh's stance symbolizes something simultaneously politically intriguing and potentially dangerous for the out-of-power party. For suddenly the Democrats see in Tehran's ill-concealed quest for nuclear weapons an issue that allows them to boast, "I ran to Bush's right on national security." As we talked about Iran over lunch, Bayh took pains to underscore his "awareness that the use of force is not a panacea and there will be adverse consequences to that as well." But the two-term senator and former governor also stressed, "We're talking about nuclear weapons in the hands of a state that aids and abets terrorism, with an apocalyptic and unstable leader who is also deeply hostile to us." Bayh may have been picturing what it might be like to sit in the Oval Office weighing conflicting recommendations about how to forestall a nuclear-armed ayatollah when he said with a sigh, "It's going to be a tough one." Bayh may be a bit more open than other Democrats about discussing the implications of militarily con-

fronting Iran, but he is far from alone in his get-tough stance. The always-square-in-the-middle-of-the-road Sen. Clinton declared in a foreign-policy address at Princeton last month, "We cannot take any option off the table in sending a clear message to the current leadership of Iran -- that they will not be permitted to acquire nuclear weapons." It is easy to draw such lines in the dust three years before any Democratic president would be forced to act on them, but there is also a risk that such threats may ultimately sound as hollow as demanding Osama bin Laden "dead or alive." Just as Iraq was always a neoconservative obsession, Democrats can easily get caught up in an I-told-you-so single-mindedness about Iran. ❖

Matthew Tully, *Indianapolis Star* - I really had no

intention of spending this year's General Assembly session taking whacks at Senate President Pro Tem Robert Garton. Honest I've actually always considered the old-school Columbus Republican one of the state's more intriguing political characters. As a columnist, I appreciate intriguing characters. And with his deep laugh and deep gaze, Garton seems like a politician out of a 1950s-era movie. Maybe that's the problem. You might recall that I wrote a column a few weeks ago poking fun at Garton for not spiking a wildly excessive lifetime health-care perk for current and future ex-lawmakers. Garton didn't like the column, but he still hasn't spiked the perk. He stood by it. That's what old-school politicians do. Nonetheless, Garton's stubborn defense of the perk is not why he is the star of today's column. Nope. Today I'm writing about Garton because of a bill he recently killed. The bill, proposed for the second year in a row by Gov. Mitch Daniels, seeks to go after the pensions of some government workers -- such as excise police and gaming agents -- who take bribes or otherwise rip off the state. So I walked over to Garton. I asked him why. His answer included "procedures" and "study committees." He worried the bill did not "address every single instance that can come up." Garton took the easy out. He acted amid talk of amending the bill to include scofflaw lawmakers -- not a popular idea with some lawmakers. The problem was that passing the bill without lawmakers would be a bad public relations move. So Garton did the easy thing. He shelved the bill. Still, Garton is not the only one at fault. Some Democrats opposed the bill because unions opposed it. Sen. Sam Smith, D-East Chicago, told me he voted against the bill in committee because he was asked to by "somebody back home." He would not elaborate beyond saying the bill opponent was a woman who could lose her state pension. Hmm, who could lose a pension under the bill? Only felons who stole from the state. Is that a solid source of advice for a state legislator? ❖



Bush at 39 percent in Gallup poll

TRENDLINE No. 1: A USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll of 1,000 adults (+/- 3%), conducted over February 9-12, shows: 39% "approve of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as President"; 56% disapprove; 4% had no opinion.

Trendline No. 2: A House panel investigating the federal government response to Hurricane Katrina blasted the Department of Homeland Security's handling of the disaster, and singled out Secretary Michael Chertoff for criticism. The criticism was seen by media sources as especially noteworthy because the report, due out on Wednesday, was written by House Republicans. ABC lead with the story, while CBS and NBC ran it just after their lead reports on the Vice President's hunting accident. ABC World News Tonight (2/13, lead story, 2:55, Gibson) reported, "When Republicans issue a scathing report on the Administration, that's a bit of a surprise. Later this week, a Republican-led investigation will brand the Bush Administration response to Hurricane Katrina a national failure. The language of condemnation is some of the strongest heard in a long time." ABC (Raddatz) added, "The report is still in draft form. But it's hard to imagine the final version could be any worse."



2006 Congressional Races

U.S. Senate: Republican: U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar. Democrat: Open. **1988 results:** Lugar (R) 1,430,525, Wickes (D) 668,778. **1994 results:** Lugar (R) 1,039,625, Jontz (D) 470,799, Bourland (L) 17,343, Barton (A) 15,801. **2000 Results:** Lugar 1,425,150, Johnson(D) 680,046, Hager (L) 33,896. **2006 Forecast:** With less than one day before filing deadline, it looks as if Lugar may go unopposed. **Status:** SAFE LUGAR.

Congressional District 2: Republican: U.S. Rep. Chris Chocola. Democrat: Steve Frances, Joe Donnelly. **Geography:** South Bend, Michigan City, Mishawaka, Elkhart, Kokomo, Plymouth, Logansport; LaPorte, St. Joseph, Starke, Marshall, Pulaski, Fulton, Cass, Carroll and parts of Howard, Porter, Elkhart and White counties. **Media Market:** South Bend-Elkhart, Indianapolis, Lafayette, Chicago. **People:** Urban/rural 73/27%; median income \$40,381; Poverty 9.5%; Race 84% white, 8% black; 5 Hispanic; Blue/white collar: 34/50%. **2000 Presidential:** Bush 53%, Gore 44%; Cook Partisan Voting Index: R+5; **2002 Result:** Chocola 95,081 (50%), Long Thompson 86,253 (46%); **2004 Result:** Chocola

140,496 (54%) Donnelly (D) 115,513 (45%) **2006 Forecast:** Donnelly is officially in the running for 2nd district congressman once again. Donnelly filed with St. Joseph County as a candidate Wednesday. The congressional candidate spoke at the county-city building later Wednesday afternoon. Back in November 2004, Donnelly lost the race to Chris Chocola. Donnelly explained Wednesday why he decided to run again for the congressional seat. He said, "When I ask myself why I ran for congress again, the answer is very clear. I love this community and these people. And folks, it's time for a change in the United States of America." Chocola, after a recent television program, mused that if he is defeated this fall, it will be due to matters in which he wasn't even involved (Colwell, South Bend Tribune). First of all, Chocola doesn't intend to lose. Nor does President Bush intend to let him lose. Thus, Air Force One again will land in South Bend, bringing the president here on Feb. 23 for another major fundraiser for Chocola. Also, Chocola has a point about things in which he was not involved being a potential source of trouble. The congressman was thinking of matters such as the leasing of the Toll Road, the daylight-saving time squabble and the congressional scandals that have forced changes in Republican House leadership. Chocola has no vote on the Toll Road lease. Nor did he have a vote on setting Hoosier clocks. Those were not matters before Congress. Nor has he been linked to any sleazy deals with lobbyists. Sure, he received campaign help from Tom DeLay, now the poster boy for sleazy deals. But DeLay, as would be expected of a leader, was helping any Republican House member in a competitive district. While lack of involvement is good when a scandal breaks, it was bad for the district in another matter, in the view of Joe Donnelly, the Granger Democrat who appears likely to be his party's challenger against Chocola for the second time. Take the Toll Road. Or, rather, don't take the Toll Road. That's what a clear majority of residents in northern portions of the 2nd District have been saying in response to Gov. Mitch Daniels' plan to lease the Toll Road to a Spanish-Australian consortium for 75 years for \$3.85 billion. Although this is not a matter before Congress, Donnelly urged Chocola to use his influence with fellow Republican Daniels to try to convince Daniels to abandon the leasing of the Toll Road. Chocola stayed out of involvement in the leasing issue. And whether any mortal could have persuaded the governor to steer in a different direction on the Toll Road is doubtful.

Status: Leans Chocola

Congressional District 3: Republican: U.S. Rep. Mark Souder. Democrat: Fort Wayne Councilman Thomas



Hayhurst, Kevin Boyd, Edward W. Smith, Thomas Schrader.

Geography: Fort Wayne, Goshen; Kosciusko, Whitley, LaGrange, Steuben, DeKalb and parts of Elkhart and Allen counties. **Media Market:** South Bend-Elkhart, Fort Wayne. **People:** Urban/rural 65/35%; median income \$44,013; Race: 87% white, 6% black, 4.5% Hispanic; Blue/white collar: 36/52% **2000 Presidential:** Bush 66%, Gore 33%. Cook Partisan Voting Index: R+17. **2002 results:** Souder 92,566 (63%), Rigdon 50,509 (34%). **2004 Results:** Souder, Parra 2004 Results: Souder 171,389 (69%), Parra 76,232 (31%). **2006 Forecast:** Officially kicking off his congressional campaign Monday. Hayhurst said in Goshen job creation, affordable health care and veterans services will be key issues in his bid to unseat Rep. Mark Souder, R-Fort Wayne (Elkhart Truth). Hayhurst is running in Indiana's Third District, which includes all but the northwest corner of Elkhart County. "I'm running for Congress because everywhere I go people tell me they're worried about the direction our country is heading," said the Fort Wayne City Councilman and retired physician. He spoke to about 20 supporters and observers during an afternoon news conference at Schrock Pavilion, which followed an earlier press event in his hometown. "I'm running for Congress because everywhere I go people tell me it's time for our government to focus on what really matters: affordable health care, creating and keeping good jobs, safeguarding America, investing in education, preserving Social Security and treating our veterans fairly," said Hayhurst, who served as an Air Force medical officer during the Vietnam War. Souder wrote Randall Tobias, US Global Aids Coordinator, charging that USAID personnel deliberately set up a non-governmental organization (NGO) precisely to hide deliberate violations of a federal law which forbids US financial support of pro-prostitution activity (MichNews.com). It came to light some months ago that a group in Indian called Sampada Grameen Mahila Sansthat (SAMGRAM) was working to stop other groups from helping underage girls out of prostitution. It was further charged that SAMGRAM was receiving US financial assistance, a violation of the US Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003, which forbids US funds from being used "to promote or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution of sex trafficking." USAID has denied the charge and a USAID staff member told Congressional staff that such inquiries by the subcommittee were "destructive." In his letter, Souder says he has come into possession of documents that "prove that USAID money financed the pro-prostitution SANRAM though a second organization called Avert, which was established with the assis-

tance of four USAID employees as a pass through entity."

Status: *Likely Souder*

Congressional District 7: Republican: Ron Franklin, Eric Dickerson. Democrat: U.S. Rep. Julia Carson, Bob Hidalgo, Kris Kiser, Joseph "Hippie Joe" Stockett.

Geography: Indianapolis. Media Market: Indianapolis. **People:** Urban 99.7%; median income \$36,522; poverty 13.5%; race white 63, black 29.4%, Hispanic 4.4%, Asian 1.3%; blue/white collar 26/58%; **2000 Presidential:** Gore 55%, Bush 43%; **Cook Partisan Voting Index:** D+6. **2002 Results:** Carson 77,478 (53%), McVey 64,379 (44%). 2004 Results: Carson 121,303, Horning (R) 97,491, Campbell (L) 4,381. **2006 Forecast:** Rep. Carson said at last Saturday's Marion County Democratic slating. "They couldn't beat me out, so they wanted me to die off, that didn't work either. If we had the money that they spent against me, we could feed every hungry child," Carson said. Kiser announced on Tuesday. "I know how this government and this Republican Congress work. Sad to say I believe we've gone astray," Kiser said. "I believe that preparing our youth for the future is more important than making the rich richer. I believe that properly arming and training our troops that are serving this nation honorably in this poorly conceived and executed war is more important than driving Exxon and Halliburton stock up. I believe healthcare and honest debate is more important than dishonoring our great constitution by spying on our citizens. I believe that addressing poverty and affordable housing is more important than polluting the air and earth for profit." Kiser said he would not run a negative race against Carson. "I have genuine respect for the incumbent and her many years of dedicated service to Hoosiers. This campaign will be conducted on the serious issues facing everyday working men and women in this district. For those wishing a traditional political campaign, negative and mean spirited: you will be disappointed...I share her values of inclusion and believe in a true democracy, for inclusion of all citizens regardless of color, sexual orientation or economic condition. **Primary Status:** *LIKELY CARSON.*

Congressional District 9: Republican: U.S. Rep. Mike Sodrel. Democrat: Baron Hill, Gretchen Clearwater, Lendall Terry, John "Cosmo" Hockersmith. **Media Market:** Evansville (11%), Indianapolis (23%), Louisville (55%), Dayton, Cincinnati (10 percent). **People:** urban/rural 52/48%, median income \$39,011; race white 94%, 2.3% black, 1.5% Hispanic; blue/white collar: 34/50%; **2000 Presidential:** Bush 56%, Gore 42%; Cook Partisan Voting Index: R+8. **2004 Presidential:** Bush 59%, Kerry 40%. **2002 Results:** Hill 96,654 (51%), Sodrel 87,169 (46%). **2002 Money:** Hill \$1.144m, Sodrel \$1.62m. **2004 Results:** Sodrel 142,197, Hill



140,772, Cox (L) 4,541. **2006 Forecast:** Former Rep. Baron Hill (D-Ind.) is relying on his base to provide him with a victory through the primary in a rematch against Sodrel (The Hill). However, Hill said in a recent interview he had never seen the Democratic base in the district so "fired up. It's never easy. If you had to measure this race by others I have run, I'm doing much better," Hill said. He said he was confident his record would serve as an asset on the campaign trail. "If you have the experience in sports or in business — the more practice you have the easier it is," he said. **Primary Status:** *SAFE HILL.*

2006 State Races

House District 1: Republican: Open. Democrat: State Rep. Linda Lawson, Lake County Councilman Ron Tabaczynski. **2002 Results:** Lawson 5,867, Myra Rosenbloom (R) 3,012. **2004 Democratic Primary:** Lawson 2,963, Pucalik 2,684. **2004 Results:** Lawson, 11,926, Baffa (R) 7,820. **2006 Forecast:** Tabaczynski will try to return to the state Legislature (Dolan, *Times of Northwest Indiana*). He served in the 1990s as a state representative for Hammond. He is in his fourth year on the County Council, where he represents a district containing most of Hammond and Munster. **Primary Status:** *TOSSUP.*

House District 8: Republican: Marcus Barlow. Democrat: State Rep. Ryan Dvorak, Roseland Council President Dorothy Snyder. **2002 Results:** Dvorak (D) 10,949, Baxmeyer (R) 9,008. **2004 Results:** Dvorak (D) 19,457. **2006 Forecast:** Dorothy Snyder, president of the Roseland Town Council, wants to turn over a new leaf in the Indiana House of Representatives (*South Bend Tribune*). The seat is held by Ryan Dvorak, D-South Bend, who introduced a bill that would force elected officials who don't pay child support out of office. That includes Dorothy Snyder's husband and fellow Roseland Town Council member David Snyder. The challenge didn't seem to faze Dvorak, who is seeking re-election. "The difference in the way we represent our constituents is clear," he said. "I'm glad to leave it up to voters to decide who would best represent them in the General Assembly," Dvorak said. **Primary Status:** *SAFE DVORAK.*

House District 15: Republican: State Rep. Don Lehe. Democrat: Newton County Sheriff Myron Sutton. **2002 Results:** Lehe 9,975, Baranowski (D) 5,641. **2004 Results:** Lehe 16,623, Childress (D) 8,153, Bell (L) 565. **2006 Forecast:** Lehe will be challenged by Sheriff Sutton. With the entry of the sheriff, we will be watching this race closely as sheriff's bring a political organization that Lehe's past two opponents haven't had. Lehe has won easily twice, but this year he will be dealing with the toll road lease issue. Sheriff

Sutton is a former horse groomsman, a jail guard and administrator who worked his way up the sheriff department since 1987. **Status:** *LEANS LEHE*

House District 17: Republican: State Rep. Steve Heim. Democrat: Nancy Dembowski. **2004 Results:** Heim 14,100, McLiver (D) 8,321, Foley (I) 854. SD5 Results: Heinold (R) 24,753, Dembowski (D) 24,398. **2006 Forecast:** Dembowski finally files. In a normal election cycle, Heim would be in relatively good shape. But with the controversies surrounding the toll road lease and time zone switch, and Dembowski's history as a mayor and former senator, this is going to be a race worth watching. **Status:** *LEANS HEIM*

House District 20: Republican: State Rep. Mary Kay Budak, LaPorte School Trustee Tom Dermody. Democrat: LaPorte City Councilman Andrea Renner. **2002 Results:** Budak 12,551, Gillon (L) 2,540. **2004 Results:** Budak 12,944, Spevak (D) 10,013, Schadowsky (L) 1,038. **2006 Forecast:** The Dermody campaign is questioning Budak's assertion that Gov. Daniels will endorse her in April. The Governor's press office would not comment. The winner of the Budak-Dermody primary will face Councilwoman Renner. Budak said the health benefits package for legislators was quietly added to a bill in 2001 that passed (Przybyla, *LaPorte Herald-Argus*). "All of us voted for that because it was a really good bill. (But) over the last year we have been discussing this and I thought, 'What?' This just doesn't look right," Budak said. Budak said she spoke to Bosma about how the benefits plan wasn't fair to the rest of state employees. Some state lawmakers who retired the past few years from the General Assembly are wealthy and don't need the sweet plan, Budak said. "These are business owners and lawyers and they want health insurance the rest of their lives (at a lower cost). Holy man," she said. Meanwhile, Budak, "a widow on a fixed income," who will face Tom Dermody of LaPorte in the Republican primary May 2, said she has no plans to retire this year and take advantage of the health plan. **Primary Status:** *TOSSUP*

House District 21: Republican: State Rep. Jackie Walorski. Democrat: Bob Kovach. **2002 Results:** Mangus 10,722. **2004 Results:** Walorski 13,753, Kaser (D) 7,737. **2006 Forecast:** Rep. Walorski finds a heavyweight in Bob Kovach, the former senator and mayor of Mishawaka, and a Statehouse Mainstay during the O'Bannon days. Former Elkhart County Democratic Chairman Don Metzger had filed, but will drop out and support Kovach. But the district is at least 56 percent Republican. Kovach will obviously try to tape into the time and toll road controversies. For that reason, we will keep a close eye on this one. Having said that, Walorski handled a potentially tricky town hall meeting in Lakeville quite well earlier this month. She is warming up to Gov. Daniels' recent references to JFK's "Profile in Courage" where



it is the duty of public servants to inform and lead their constituents. If Walorski finds herself in political trouble late this summer or early fall, this race could be a precursor to a Democratic takeover of the House. **Status:** *LEANS WALORSKI*

House District 45: Republican: State Rep. Bruce Borders. Democrat: Mike Bledsoe. **2002 Results:** Chowning 9,627, Borders 9,337. **2004 Results:** Borders 13,878, Chowning 10,643. **2006 Forecast:** Mike Bledsoe, a Democrat from Farmersburg, will challenge State Rep. Bruce Borders (Franklin, *Linton Daily World*). "I think that the people of the 45th District deserve better representation than what they're getting," Bledsoe said. "I think their views need to be expressed in the legislature." Bledsoe is a former high school principal at North Central High School in Greene County. **Status:** *LEANS BORDERS*.

House District 56: Republican: Open. Democrat: Rep. Phil Pflum. **2002 Results:** Pflum 6,511, Hamm (R) 6,096. **2004 Results:** Pflum 10,645, Yanos 9,382, Bell (L) 661. **2006 Forecast:** Pflum is, thus far, unopposed. Given the competitive nature of this district, that's a surprise. **Status:** *SAFE PFLUM*

House District 57: Republican: Shelbyville Councilman Rob Nolley, Shelby County Councilman Sean Eberhart, Edward Dundas, Karen Frazier, Marvin Pavlov. Democrat: J.D. Lux. **2002 Results:** Stine (R) 8,384, Wheeler (D) 5,429, Jester (L) 508. **2004 Results:** Messer (R) 16,004. **2006 Forecast:** J.D. Lux, the former Shelbyville city attorney and a former aide to Attorney General Jeff Modisett will try to capture the seat that eluded him in 2000, when he lost to Sheriff Michael Herndon, 10,903 to 9,745. Lux poses a formidable challenge to Republicans in holding on to this seat being vacated by State Rep. Luke Messer. **Primary Status:** *TOSSUP*

House District 77: Republican: Andrew G. Smith. Democrat: State Rep. Phil Hoy. **2004 Results:** Hoy (D) 11,308, Hennig (R) 9,804, Garrett (I) 1,285. **2006 Forecast:** Unconscionable. That's what the likely Republican challenger to Rep. Phil Hoy, D-Evansville, called Hoy's vote against a controversial highway plan that would privatize the state's toll road (Evansville Courier & Press). Hoy said it would have been unconscionable to vote for the plan. Republican Andrew G. Smith launched the attack on Hoy on Friday, saying Hoy's vote against House Bill 1008, named Major Moves by Gov. Mitch Daniels, was a vote against a bill "providing \$700 million of startup funding for the direct-route Evansville-to-Indianapolis I-69." Transportation officials have said if the bill is passed, they are still months away from seeking bids for I-69. "The citizens of Evansville and Southwestern Indiana have been waiting, literally, decades for this much-needed road," Smith said. "We finally have a real way forward, rather

than more of the empty promises we've all heard year after year. And Phil Hoy votes against it? It's unconscionable." Hoy retorted the bill "saddles us as a state with a 75-year lease. It's also a lease most likely with a company not based in the United States. That company can be sold." Hoy said President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who initiated the interstate system, envisioned the system serving defense as well as transportation needs. "I don't want to see it leased to businesses in other countries," Hoy said. Hoy said a district survey showed that 60 percent of those responding are "opposed to the privatization of anything in the state of Indiana." An online survey had shown that a high percentage opposes Major Moves." Smith blasted Hoy for disparaging Aussies. "While we appreciate Rep. Hoy's strong commitment to national defense, we can't help but wonder what he has against Australia, the home country of the company most likely to finance the new interstate under the proposed leasing agreement," Smith said. "Australia has not only been a faithful ally in the War on Terror, it has never once attacked the United States in the entire history of our two great nations," said Andrew Smith, Hoy's Republican challenger in the upcoming elections. "To suggest that Australia—or renegade Australians—might use our highways to stage attacks against the United States is not only irresponsible, it is deeply unfair," Smith continued. **Primary Status:** *LEANS HOY*

House District 88: Republican: House Speaker Brian Bosma. Democrat: Susan Fuldauer. **2004 Results:** Bosma 23,289, Gordon (L) 2,132. **2006 Forecast:** A public relations director for an insurance company plans to challenge Republican Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma for his seat in November (*Associated Press*). The Marion County Democratic Slating Committee on Saturday chose Susan Fuldauer to run against Bosma, who was first elected to the House in 1986. "Indiana is teetering on the edge of a new era in government," Fuldauer said in a news release. "Hoosiers are becoming tired and frustrated with old-style politicians running our state government." Fuldauer, 49, is public relations director for American Income Life. We don't believe the way this district is drawn is conducive to an upset. **Status:** *SAFE BOSMA*.

House District 89: Republican: State Rep. Larry Buell. Democrat: John F. Barnes. **2004 Results:** Buell 15,391. **2006 Forecast:** Democrats had hoped that Indianapolis Councilor Mary Moriarty Adams would challenge Buell. If that had happened, Buell would have been vulnerable due to the changing demographics of his district in a potentially Democratic year. But Adams passed, and Buell can breathe a little easier. Not much is known about Barnes, who filed on Tuesday. **Status:** *LEANS BUELL*. ❖



Opposition to merger bill grows

INDIANAPOLIS - Local backers and opponents of government consolidation in Vanderburgh County headed to the Indiana Statehouse on Wednesday to say they oppose House Bill 1344

(*Evansville Courier & Press*). Sen. Vaneta Becker, R-Evansville, is the main Senate sponsor of the bill, which would establish a referendum in 2006 on whether to continue with unification talks. If a majority of two separate pools of voters - city residents and county residents living outside the city - approve the ballot question, a study commission would develop a detailed merger plan. But after both sides spoke against aspects of the bill, Becker jokingly said maybe it should just die. "From the testimony, it seems nobody likes this bill," Becker said. Sen. Larry Lutz, D-Evansville, is a co-sponsor of the bill and said it is a tool to let voters have their voices be heard. "Whether Sen. Becker and I support consolidation is not the issue before you today, the way I see it," Lutz told committee members. "It's letting the voting public decide."



Lubbers guts ISTEP bill

INDIANAPOLIS - A key senator scrapped the governor's plan to move the ISTEP-Plus student achievement test to the spring on Wednesday, surprising dozens of local educators who showed up to oppose the effort (Guinane, *Times of Northwest Indiana*). Even members of the Senate Education and Career Development Committee complained they weren't notified of the change until minutes before the panel met. With the move to spring facing strong opposition, Chairwoman Theresa

Lubbers, R-Indianapolis, presented an amendment that gutted the legislation. The opponents who packed the committee room and spilled out into the hallway were told they could not testify for or against moving the test to early May from the fall. Sen. Earline Rogers, D-Gary, said the ISTEP switch likely would have failed had Lubbers called for vote.

School transfer bill passes Senate

INDIANAPOLIS - A House panel has approved Senate legislation making it easier for students to choose their school or school district (*South Bend Tribune*). Senate Bill 60 does not break new ground, as the state Board of Education already can authorize student transfers at parents' request. But the proposed legislation allows parents to apply directly to another school for transfer, with approval by the school principal and district superintendent, or by the district school board. Bill sponsor Sen. Luke Kenley, R-Noblesville, said it reflects "a customer service approach to schooling" that is available in most states.

Changes in informed consent bill coming

INDIANAPOLIS - A Senate committee likely will make significant changes to a bill that would require clinics to inform women seeking abortions that life begins at conception, the panel's chairman said yesterday (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). Sen. Patricia Miller, who heads the Health and Provider Services Committee, said changes will be offered during a committee meeting next week, when she anticipates a vote on two abortion bills. One would require doctors to tell women seeking abortions that a fetus may feel pain. It also would require abortion providers to give women written information that "human life begins when a human ovum is fertilized by a

human sperm." If passed, it would be one of the furthest-reaching abortion consent laws in the country.

Powder in envelop shuts Statehouse

INDIANAPOLIS - State police temporarily shuttered the Capitol building Wednesday afternoon after an aide to House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, opened mail containing an unidentified coarse white powder (*Times of Northwest Indiana*). The scare closed the Capitol for about a half-hour. The building never was evacuated, but those outside temporarily were prohibited from entering. The start of some afternoon committee meetings was delayed by a few minutes. No one was harmed, but the FBI is analyzing the substance that spilled from the envelope, Bosma told reporters. An initial test gave no indication of anthrax or other harmful agents.

Martin County wants to shift back to Eastern

SHOALS - A southwestern Indiana county that was allowed to move to the Central time zone might now ask all of its neighbors to choose Eastern time instead (*Louisville Courier-Journal*). The Martin County Council asked its attorney this week to draft a resolution calling for a united move by all southwestern Indiana counties -- Martin included -- for Eastern time. Frances K. Taylor, the county's auditor, yesterday said that the resolution probably will be ready by the end of the month. County officials have scheduled a meeting Feb. 22 to discuss time zones. "They're also pursuing trying to get the southwestern counties to form a bloc and commit to one time zone or another," she said. "The whole idea is to be consistent so there won't be lines drawn in the middle of state or in the middle of our southwestern portion."

