



Final forecast for an epic election

*Obama, Daniels,
Montagano,
Dem House victories*

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

MARION - The answers to 2008's persistent questions begin to fill in 30 hours from now as the polls close on the most sensational political year in Indiana since the Civil War.

The statistics already show that Hoosiers have taken to the spirit of voting we saw in Iraq in the dark winter of 2004. As a lethal insurgency gathered, citizens there proudly held up their ink-stained fingers in their war-torn cities to show they had voted. Here in Indiana, as the smoke from the Wall Street debacle begins to clear, we wait peacefully, patiently in long lines ... on sunny Indian Summer Saturday afternoons ... to vote early. Some 630,000 of us, a stunning number, already have voted.



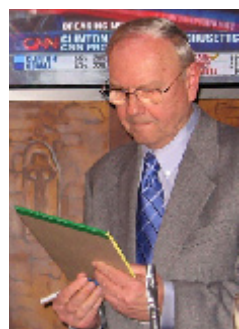
The Iraq War has faded from much of the rhetoric. We once thought it would cast a large shadow over the American political scene. Gas prices have faded, too, dipping below the \$2 a gallon mark. Conventional wisdom once

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Focus on Indiana

By **JACK COLWELL**

SOUTH BEND - Whether Indiana turns red or blue on TV network electoral maps or lingers undecided at 10 Tuesday night will capture national attention. Focus will be on Indiana as an indicator of the presidential winner.



Most of Indiana is on Eastern Time. Polls close earlier (6 p.m.) than in many other states. Due to this and because results usually are so decisively for the Republican presidential nominee, Indiana often has been the first state declared for the GOP.

Although Indiana hasn't gone Democratic in a presidential election since 1964, it's a battleground state this time, targeted by Barack Obama.



“I had no prior knowledge of any of the mailings. At the same time, I’m thankful the state party has taken an interest in my race.” - HD72 Republican challenger Ed Clere



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Brian A. Howey, publisher
Mark Schoeff Jr. Washington writer
Jack E. Howey, editor
Beverly Phillips, associate editor

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Call 317-631-9450.

HOWEY POLITICS INDIANA

PO Box 40265
Indianapolis, IN 46240-0265.

Contact Us

www.howeypolitics.com

bhowey2@gmail.com

Main Office: 317-202-0210.

Howey's Mobile: 317-506-0883.

Indianapolis Fax: 317-254-0535.

Washington: 202-256-5822.

Business Office: 317-631-9450.

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If results from key precincts are so clearly for John McCain that Indiana can again be colored Republican red early on election night, this will indicate that momentum for Obama has stalled and could be in danger of losing nationally.

If Indiana is colored Democratic blue, it will indicate instead that Obama is winning the presidency, probably winning big in the Electoral College.

What if results are so close that network analysts struggle to call a winner in Indiana at 10 p.m.? It would indicate that Obama is likely to win, but perhaps without Indiana and perhaps not big.

Thompson's lost opportunity

When Jill Long Thompson had to turn off the TV, she left Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels basically running unopposed. Daniels has run steadily and effectively on TV, presenting a positive image to withstand job losses and the sour economy that endangers many other Republican incumbents around the nation.

Unless Long Thompson is pulled along by a strong Obama tide - actually she needs a tsunami - Daniels will win, perhaps handily, and the Democratic challenger will be left pondering what might have been if she could have been on TV all of September and October. What if she could have driven home a message critical of the "Bush-Daniels" economy and hammered at other issues?

Early polls showed that Daniels could be vulnerable and the race could be close. Polls now show that Long Thompson has fallen fast, seemingly out of contention.

TV buys were especially important in this race because most voters are focused on the presidential race and not much at all on a campaign for governor that hasn't exactly been exciting. Many first-time voters attracted by the presidential drama neither know nor care much

about who's running for governor.

Daniels, with superb TV spots since early spring, did just what he needed to do. Long Thompson couldn't afford to do what she needed to do.

If Long Thompson does lose, especially if she comes fairly close despite lack of funds, there will be finger-pointing among Hoosier Democrats over blame.

What a difference 2 years make

What a difference two years make. Indiana's 2nd Congressional District was a battleground in 2006, targeted by both parties, with millions of dollars for negative TV ads. The 2nd was in the national spotlight as one of the districts to determine control of the House. No targeting this time. No TV wars. No spotlight. No effect on House control.

Congressman Joe Donnelly, D-Granger, who was the challenger in that battle against Republican incumbent Chris Chocola in '06, is placed now in the "safe" category by those who do the targeting. Donnelly needs only positive TV to remind viewers of his accomplishments. Republican challenger Luke Puckett lacks funds for any kind of air war to raise issues. The Tribune/WSBT poll last week showed these percentages: Donnelly, 54; Puckett, 40.

The final percentages will be important in determining how the district race will look in two more years. If Puckett trims that margin down to a single digit or at least gets about 45 percent of the vote, he could be viable for a rematch, perhaps finally with some help from the national level of his party. Donnelly got 44.5 percent in losing in his first challenge to Chocola in 2004, even though getting not a cent from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and went on with party support to win in the rematch. The district is so close politically, that almost anyone with a major party nomination can get 40 percent. Getting up to 45 without party targeting is a challenge. ❖



positioned those issues as millstones and opportunities. The Clinton-Giuliani showdown of 2007 has become the John McCain-Barack Obama epic of '08. If there was any doubt about Indiana's significance, the fact that in the final 20 hours of the campaign both McCain and Obama will be walking on Indiana soil and the fact that we've seen all four members of the tickets here in the final week is a profound statement of the Hoosier impact in the national picture.

Some 500,000 of us have attended a presidential rally. We've watched Bill Clinton campaign in Dan Burton's congressional district, Hillary down shots at Bronko's, and Barack Obama walk his family's Tipton County homestead and tour the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame with George McGinnis. We saw Sarah Palin draw nearly 60,000 people in three appearances. There is a green "Mitch" sign in the front yard of the late Julia Carson's home.

Tomorrow night we learn if this Hoosier political blender produces something recognizable: a landslide victory for Gov. Daniels or a 53 percent win? Speaker Bauer or Speaker Bosma? Congressman Souder or Congressman-elect Montano? Attorney General Pence? Or Zoeller? At this moment in time, it is impossible to determine because there are so many variables that can twist battered conventional wisdom even further.



How has conventional wisdom been turned on its ear? Above, note the Obama signs in the windows above the Jefferson County GOP headquarters in Madison. Or the "Mitch" signs in the front yard of the home of the late U.S. Rep. Julia Carson, now owned by Daniels supporter Sam Carson. (HPI Photo by Ellen Jackson)

Howey Politics Indiana presents its final forecast of the 2008 election. We will be back late Wednesday or early Thursday with our first wave of analysis on this most incredible political year. Our statistical analysis, our educated guesses, our gut checks and our darts onto the corkboard are listed here:

Presidential

The latest polls from Zogby Reuters in Indiana (Oct.30-Nov. 2) have John McCain leading Barack Obama 49-

44 percent. An ARG Poll (Oct. 28-31) had the race tied at 48 percent. The Real Clear Politics Indiana average is McCain 47.2% to 46.2 percent for Obama. Howey/Gauge had McCain leading 47-45 percent on Oct. 23-24, some 11 days before the election. Since our poll, the two presidential tickets have or will have made six additional visits on Hoosier soil. This is an organic race that will remain in constant flux until 6 p.m. Tuesday.

History certainly has McCain's back in Indiana. The easy thing to do would be to forecast Indiana into the red column with, perhaps, a purple tinge. Many observers - including HPI - believe it will be as close as Hillary Clinton's 1.14 percent win over Obama in the primary. Obama wouldn't be coming back to Indiana on Tuesday if he had

it in the bag and he wouldn't be coming back if he didn't think he could win it. This is a pure tossup.

Several elements lead us to predict a narrow Obama win. The biggest is his ground game. With the 47



satellite offices, the more than \$5 million spent on TV, the 49 visits to the state by the Illinois senator, the way the "change" narrative has obviously moved so many Hoosiers leads us in this direction. There are some other intangibles. After watching the most prolific ground game in modern politics (Bush-Cheney 2004) and the fact that McCain had this nomination essentially sewed up in mid-February, you have to wonder why his campaign seems so flat-footed here in Indiana. McCain is not popular on Capitol Hill. Sen. Dick Lugar's support has been tepid - he will "support the Republican nominee." I'm not sure we're seeing the dwindling GOP congressional delegation really pulling out all the stops for him here. U.S. Reps. Steve Buyer, Mark Souder and Mike Pence are not on the card for today's third campaign stop, the first since July 1. We see more enthusiasm for Gov. Palin than we do for McCain.

We've forecast that the Obama ground organization overcomes not only the racist tendencies in some pockets of Indiana, but lifts it into the 11 Electoral College votes. If he doesn't, it will be hard to see another Democrat come along in the future and try to shake Indiana's red tendencies. We forecast a narrow Obama victory here.

Nationally, we see an Obama Electoral College victory in the 340 range.

Indiana Governor

Gov. Mitch Daniels did not campaign last weekend. Just before he walked off RV1 for the final time last Thursday, he told HPI he might go motorcycling last weekend, though that gave way to golf. There were no campaign stops. The last polls show anywhere from an 18 percent (Star/13/Selzer) to a 31 percent (Howey/Gauge) victory. Democratic sources say their internals showed anywhere from an



Barack Obama campaigns before 40,000 Hoosiers at Wicker Park at Highland on Halloween night. (Times of Northwest Indiana photo)

18 to 27 percent Daniels victory. So the question here isn't who; it's by how much?

We view the Daniels/Skillman campaign in the same lofty heights of other stellar campaigns: Evan Bayh in 1988, Frank O'Bannon in 1996, Sen. Dan Coats in 1992, Bart Peterson in 1999, Graham Richard in '99 and '03, Dan Quayle in 1980, Tim Roemer in 1990 and Steve Buyer in 1992. Daniels never ran a negative ad. He is positioned to buck what appears to be an historic national wave.

How much does Daniels win? Ultimately, we think his floor and ceiling is in the 55 to 57 percent range. Thompson's golden opportunity came during the Wall Street meltdown and she was broke at the time. We suspect Thompson's ceiling is in the upper 30s to low 40s, with some of the anti-Mitch vote going to Libertarian Andy Horning due to Thompson's name recognition problems.



Gov. Mitch Daniels wound up his final campaign in Milan on Thursday at the Reservation Restaurant. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)



Republican U.S. Reps. Mike Pence, Steve Buyer and Mark Souder are facing a Democratic wave. Souder is in trouble and we're watching Pence. (HPI Photos)

Congressional

We believe U.S. Rep. Mark Souder is in deep danger of losing. Howey/Gauge pollster Holly Davis put his re-election prospects in the 20 percent range. We're hearing similar sentiments out of Washington. Howey/Gauge had Montagano with a 44-41 percent lead on Oct. 23-24. We forecast a narrow Montagano victory.

In the 6th CD, there is no public polling, but if you study the 1974 Watergate GOP implosion, there were a

couple of Republican congressmen - David Dennis in east central Indiana and Earl Landgrebe - who were washed out unexpectedly. Landgrebe was more of a mark when he told the press "don't confuse me with the facts" over Nixon and Watergate. If you look at the Cook Partisan Index, Dan Burton leads it with a +20 percent Republican district (one of the most Republican in the nation), followed by Rep. Steve Buyer at +18, Souder at +17 Republican, and U.S. Rep. Mike Pence at +10. As one GOP operative told us, there is some smoke, but the rumblings are somewhat obscured. There is some talk in Washington that Pence might be vulnerable, but some of that could be detractors taking swipes at his power base. Pence, however, has some rust belt auto cities like Anderson, Muncie, Richmond and Connersville that have really taken it on the chin. The African-American Obama vote in these cities will be intense. We know of at least one internal poll that had Pence up only 3 percent in his rematch with Rev. Barry Welsh, who hasn't been able to run TV ads. We know that Obama and the Clintons made dozens of stops in the 6th CD last spring, igniting Democratic passions. So if there's a stunner on the congressional level, it would be Pence. We're not predicting that Pence loses; we just think that if there is a ghost in the bushes (pun intended), it's most likely to spring out in the 6th.

Buyer has had to fend off Democrat Nels Ackerson, who has aimed some pretty good TV and radio at the Republican. We're just not hearing the same type of chatter that we are with Pence.

We expect U.S. Rep. Baron Hill to win by double digits in what will likely be his fourth and final race against Mike Sodrel. Everyone else breezes, including popular freshman Democrats Brad Ellsworth and Joe Donnelly.

Indiana House

SWITCHES: We forecast a two to four seat majority for the Democrats. With the current 51-49 Democratic House, we see the parties swapping queens: Republican

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Mark Mesmer winning HD63 held by Rep. Dave Crooks, and former Greencastle Mayor Nancy Michael defeating Republican Amos Thomas in HD44. House: 51-49 Democrat

TOSSUPS: Then there are the pure tossups: HD26 between Republican Randy Truitt and Democrat John Polles; HD31 between State Rep. Tim Harris and Democrat Joe Pearson; HD46 between State Rep. Vern Tincher and Republican Bob Heaton; HD89 between Democrat John Barnes and Republican Chris Swatts in the Larry Buehl GOP open seat, and HD97 between State Rep. Jon Elrod and Democrat Mary Ann Sullivan. Of those, Obama's coattails in the college towns of Marion and West Lafayette as well as in HD89 could make the difference. We would not be surprised to see the Democrats hold on to HD26 and take two GOP seats, though internal polling shows all of these too close to call. While both parties see the Tincher/Heaton race as a tossup, informed observers in both parties give Tincher a slight advantage. Another tossup is HD97 but we have observers in both parties predicting that Elrod hangs on. Elrod is running some pretty decent TV responding to attacks from Sullivan. However, with a 10 percent African-American base, the Obama factor comes into play. House: 53-47 Democrat; 54-46 if Elrod loses.

INCUMBENT ADVANTAGE: We give State Reps. Don Lehe (HD15), Scott Reske (HD37), Bill Davis in HD33 and Bruce Borders in HD45 the advantage. House: 53-47 Democrat.

LATEBREAKERS: House Republicans appear to be trying to expand the field into districts where Gov. Daniels might have longer coattails than Barack Obama. Democrats would be in a lot better shape if they had a gubernatorial nominee that was in a closer race. In HD68 State Rep. Bob Bischoff is trying to fend off Republican Jud McMillin. Right to Life accused Bischoff of having its endorsement. Bischoff is now running Cincinnati TV. So there's smoke there. In HD75, J.D. Strouth is running a pro-life campaign against State Rep. Dennis Avery who has been in the House for 34 years. In HD72, Republican Ed Clere is running an attack campaign against State Rep. William Cochran. We're



STROUTH

Indiana House Horse Race

Democrats

51

HD63 Messmer vs. Burger

HD26 (Open) Polles vs. Truitt
HD46 Tincher vs. Heaton

HD75 Avery vs. Strouth
HD37 Reske vs. Gaskill
HD68 Bischoff vs. McMillin
HD72 Cochran vs. Clere

Republicans

49

Switch

HD44 Thomas vs. Michael

Tossups

HD31 Harris vs. Pearson
HD89 (Open) Swatts vs. Barnes
HD97 Elrod vs. Sullivan

Leans

HD15 Lehe vs. Sutton
HD92 Hinkle vs. DeKemper

Likely

HD35 Lutz vs. Mengelt
HD4 Soliday vs. Chubb
HD45 Borders vs. Marshall

Safe

Democrats: Fry, Dembrowski. Austin, Blanton, Robertson, Lawson, Harris, C. Brown, Bauer, Cheatham, Niezgodski, Dvorak, Pelath, Stevenson, Reardon, Dobis, V. Smith, VanDenburgh, Bardon, Klinker, Herrell, Tyler, Grubb, Kersey, Pflum, Pierce, Welch, Battles, Goodin, Stemler, Cochran, Oxley, Stilwell, Avery, Van Haaften, Riecken (Open), GiaQuinta, Moses, DeLaney (Open), Pryor (Open), Bartlett, Porter, Crawford, Summers, Day.

Republicans: Dermody, Clements, Yarde, Borrer, Neese, Wolkins, Walorski, Ruppel, Friend, McClain, J. Thompson, Richardson, Turner, Davis, Torr, Steuerwald, T. Brown, Borders, Foley, Culver (Open), Leonard, Dodge, Cherry, Saunders, Knollman, Eberhart, Burton, M. Smith, Koch, Duncan, Crouch, Lehman (Open), Espich, Bell, Pond, Noe, Bosma, Murphy, Behning, Frizzell. ❖

not sure which one, but we think the GOP has a chance at peeling one of these seats off in the "time for a change" environment. House: 52-48 Democrat.

So, our forecast is a 52-48 Democratic House. We don't mean to equivocate, but it could easily go one seat either way.

Statewides

Conventional wisdom is the statewides follow the governor, who sets in motion a ticket-splitting trend. Of the two, we believe superintendent candidate Tony Bennett is most likely to follow Daniels. We wonder if a number of Hillary Clinton supporters might be inclined to buck that trend and vote for Linda Pence over Greg Zoeller in the attorney general's race. Our forecast: a GOP sweep for Daniels, Zoeller and Bennett. ❖



Rich James, Post-Tribune: He's young. He's black. He has the worst name imaginable for running for president of the United States. How is it that this first-term senator, who electrified the political world with a speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, is primed to be the first black elected president of the United States of America? I've got some thoughts on that. For starters, the core issues that Republicans have used to win the last two elections — God, guns and gays — are off the table. The blue-collar Democrats who bought into those issues over a shot and a beer have had an awakening. They found that embracing God and guns and hating gays doesn't put any food on the table. And they also found that Republicans were eliminating scores of high-paying jobs and shipping them overseas. And while the profits mounted for those American companies, there weren't any additional jobs created in this country — as John McCain likes to say these days. The Republican trickle-down theory of economics didn't provide even a drip. Those Democrats who sold out for an NRA membership are coming home — and they are coming in droves. That skinny guy with a funny name has given the party the very thing George Bush and the Republicans took away — hope. You can see it at the rallies. Not only is Barack Obama leading in the polls, you can see the fervor on the stump — something the Democratic Party hasn't seen since JFK. In the last two weeks, there have been 100,000 at Obama rallies in St. Louis and Denver — unprecedented numbers, particularly for cities in red states. If Obama is so new and inexperienced and John McCain so ready to be president, why are the Democrats coming back to their party and the majority of the independents backing Obama? ❖

Sylvia Smith, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette: It's true that the presidential campaign has sucked most of the oxygen out of the political world and that this year's congressional race has been somewhat under the radar. So you might think you're not sufficiently clear on the differences between Republican Mark Souder and Democrat Michael Montagano to make an intelligent choice. After all, Montagano's stand on several controversial social issues (abortion, guns) is indistinguishable from Souder's, and Montagano has been less than eager to spell out his views in many other areas. You might intend to pop into the voting booth and choose your favorite presidential candidate and call it a day. But there are other ways to think of the congressional election than just a choice among Souder, Montagano and Libertarian William Larsen. People often vote a certain way to "send a message." Probably most

people who want to send an "I'm fed up" message will do so with their vote for president. But others may want to say something different. If you think Barack Obama is likely to

win, but you are uneasy about having one-party rule in Washington, you might want to mark your ballot for Souder — even if you don't like him very much. This would be a symbolic vote because there is no chance that the House will return to Republican control. However, there's something to be said for having cogent voices from the opposition party at senior committee levels (which would be Souder's situation). If you think a President Obama would be able to get more done with a Congress that's solidly in Democratic

control, Montagano's your guy, even if you are uneasy about his youth and reliance on union donations to fuel his campaign. ❖

Mark Bennett, Terre Haute Tribune-Star:

As Vigo County goes, so goes the country. Or rather, here comes the country. Because votes here so closely reflect the nationwide results, America wants to know what we know. "Good Morning America," that is. And CNN and NPR and even *Il Sole 24 Ore*, an Italian newspaper based in Milan, and Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald*. Those international news outlets are trying to find the country's pulse here, when it comes to Decision 2008 — Barack Obama vs. John McCain. They follow a long line of actors, TV personalities, politicians' relatives, policy experts who've visited the Terre Haute area since this campaign began two light years ago. They like us. They really like us. Well, sort of. Here's how the *Sydney Morning Herald* described this locale: "The hinterland of Vigo is pretty farmland, with rolling hills. Terre Haute is an industrial town of 60,000, notable only for its unpleasant smell, its strip of fast-food restaurants and its Indiana State University campus." Of course, we've heard that before, and our thick skin and easy-going nature allows us to calmly tolerate such comments from an interesting country that used to be a British penal colony. Our toughness comes in handy right now. We can survive under the global microscope, and maybe even thrive. Seriously, ISU, Rose-Hulman and St. Mary-of-the-Woods should form a political-science think tank right here in Vigo County — the heartbeat of America. Our presidential voting record validates that status. Our two misfires can easily be explained. In 1952, we gave Adlai Stevenson a narrow local win over Dwight Eisenhower, but Stevenson hailed from neighboring Illinois. And in 1908, when Vigo voters preferred William Jennings Bryan over William Howard Taft, the Cubs had just won the World Series. It was a confusing time. Otherwise, we've been dead-on, hence our popularity. ❖

