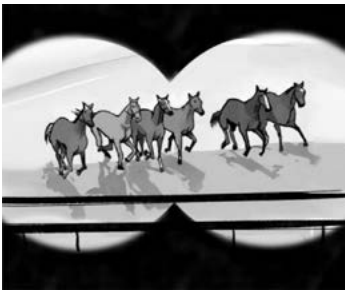


State Affairs/HPI poll has big Braun lead

Senator leads with 44%, Crouch 10%; Doden & Chambers tied at 8%

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY

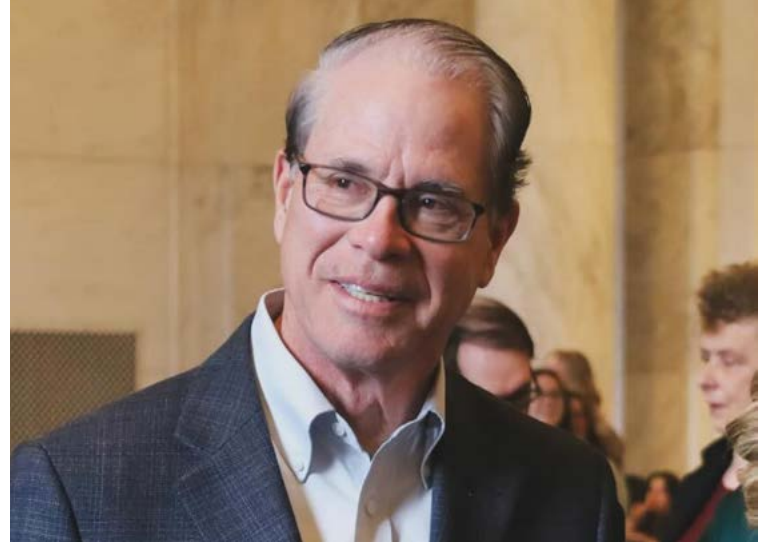
INDIANAPOLIS — U.S. Sen. Mike Braun holds a commanding lead in a new *State Affairs/Howey Politics Indiana* poll of likely Hoosier Republican voters in the May 7 gubernatorial primary.



Asked who they would vote for if the primary were held today, 44% of respondents picked Braun. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch trailed with 10% of the vote, and Brad

Chambers and Eric Doden each received 8%. Curtis Hill and Jamie Reitenour got 2% each, with 26% of poll respondents undecided.

This online survey comes after Chambers and Doden spent



more than \$19 million combined on TV advertising, according to Ad-Impact. While some of that spending went to basic biography spots, much of it was aimed at Braun over issues such as police qualified immunity, the southern border and a podcast where Braun suggested he might attend a Black Lives Matters rally. During that same time, Braun spent \$7.7 million, while Crouch spent \$2.6 million.

CONTINUED ON PG. 4

Sen. Braun and CHIPS

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — Over the past two years, auto assembly plants in Fort Wayne; Chicago; Kansas City; Dearborn, Michigan; and Louisville, Kentucky, had to shut down for weeks at a time over the shortage of chips.



Not as in potatoes, but as in semiconductors. Back lots filled with cars, trucks and SUVs that were nearly completed, except for the dozens of computer chips that help them run. Dealerships ran short of

CONTINUED ON PG. 2

Quote of the Week

“I told Mr. Noel, ‘Don’t do anything stupid. Do not try to deceive me or defy me. You will not like the consequences.’ Today is that day. You are not the law. You don’t interpret the law. You don’t enforce the law. You’re not above the law. I find that you are in contempt of this court. Take him into custody.”



Judge Larry Medwick, finding Jamey Noel in contempt

Braun and CHIPS, from page 1

new vehicles. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted auto supply chains that relied on mostly foreign-made semiconductors from South Korea, Taiwan, China and Japan. With the subsequent social shutdowns, consumers began ordering an array of electronic products, resulting in widespread shortages.

U.S. Sens. Todd Young and Chuck Schumer banded together to forge the CHIPS and Science Act, and President Joe Biden signed it in the summer of 2022. Indiana's congressional delegation was split, with Young and Republican U.S. Reps. Jim Baird and Trey Hollingsworth, along with Democratic Reps. Frank Mrvan and André Carson, voting to pass, while U.S. Sen. Mike Braun and Republican U.S. Reps. Jim Banks, the late Jackie Walorski, Victoria Spartz, Larry Bucshon and Greg Pence opposed the bill.



Last week, South Korean chipmaker SK hynix announced plans to invest more than \$3.87 billion to establish a new facility in West Lafayette next to the Purdue University campus.

“The CHIPS and Science Act opened a door that Indiana has been able to sprint through, and companies like SK hynix are helping to build our high-tech future,” Young said in a release. “For me, this journey began roughly four years ago — it was then when I introduced a piece of legislation known as the Endless Frontier Act. The intent was simple, to invest in emerging technologies so that we could make our country more safe at the same time we made our country more prosperous.”

That Sen. Braun showed up at this announcement ceremony raised some eyebrows because he had voted against the bill. After voting no in 2022, Braun posted this statement on Facebook: “We do have a strategic issue where we’re not keeping some things here that are vital. Whether that’s done by the federal government becoming a partner in it, I’m not so sure. Everything in either the CHIPS Act or the broader bill — either the \$54 billion or the \$250 billion — none of it’s paid for. So, you’ve got to

always take that into consideration. So, those are two issues.”

A spokesman for Braun’s gubernatorial campaign, speaking on background this week, told State Affairs/Howey Politics Indiana that Sen. Braun’s objection was due to fiscal reasons and that he backed the substance of the legislation. The spokesman added that the event last week was

also not because of the CHIPS Act because SK hynix has not received money from the legislation.

“Let’s not forget: If U.S. Senator Mike Braun had his way, today’s announcement would have never happened,” said former state Secretary of Commerce Brad Chambers, who is running for the GOP gubernatorial nomination against Braun. “Despite his campaign pledge in 2018 to bring jobs back to Indiana, he voted against the CHIPS Act, against Indiana’s economic future and against thousands of high-wage careers for Hoosiers, just like the ones announced today. His decision today to show up for a photo op made possible by the very bill he voted against represents the worst of Washington. Indiana deserves better.”

Since 2022, eight companies have committed to establishing semiconductor manufacturing plants in Indiana, according to state officials.

Rep. Banks, the likely Republican U.S. Senate nominee, pointed to a memo from the House Republican Study Committee, which

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Braun and CHIPS, from page 2

he chaired in 2022, that reflected his position: The CHIPS bill “would hand out \$250 billion with little to no guardrails to prevent those funds from helping China and ignore the fact that inflation, which has been driven by the Democrats’ endless spending, has reached 9.1%.”

Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Baird, whose 4th Congressional District will be home to SK hynix, said of his vote for the act: “In the last year alone, Indiana has secured several multi-billion-dollar investments to establish semiconductor chip research and production facilities further securing our state’s role at the forefront of American ingenuity and innovation. These investments will create thousands of jobs across our state and generate millions of dollars to boost our local economy because businesses see the endless potential in Indiana and across America’s heartland. The reality is we will be unable to maintain our competitive edge against China absent a comprehensive response to China’s aggressive approach to technology dominance.”



Baird added that he had been “reassured by this legislation’s guardrails” that will “keep our most technologically advanced semiconductors out of the hands of China and valuable research dollars here in America. I recognize the national security threats China’s command of this space poses, and I believe this bill can positively reshape America’s global influence and power for decades as well as position us to compete with China for ownership of technological advancement.”

SK hynix’s 430,000-square-foot advanced packaging, fabrication and research and development facility will create “high-intensity and AI microelectronic products and applications in Indiana,” Gov. Eric Holcomb said. The facility will sit on 90 acres at the Purdue Research Park. The investment is expected to create up to 800 jobs by the end of 2030, the governor’s office said in a news release. “We believe this project will lay the foundation for a new Silicon Heartland; a semi-

conductor ecosystem centered in the Midwest Triangle,” SK hynix CEO Kwak Noh-Jung said, adding that Indiana will lead the nation into this new realm of technological growth.

“Indiana is a global leader in innovating and producing the products that will power our future economy, and today’s news is proof positive to that fact,” Gov. Holcomb said. “This new semiconductor innovation and packaging plant not only reaffirms the state’s role in the high-tech sector but is also another tremendous step forward in advancing U.S. innovation and national security, putting Hoosiers at the forefront of national and global advancement.”

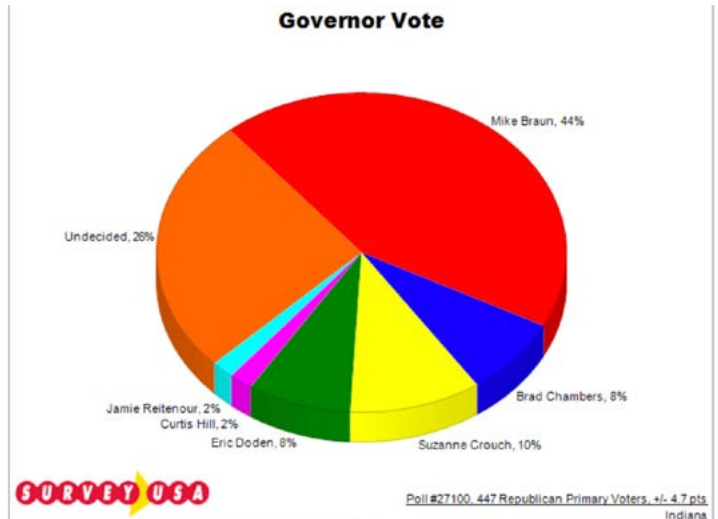
Sen. Young cited national security in joining Senate Majority Leader Schumer in sponsoring the legislation. But having these emerging tech facilities in Indiana’s new silicon sector will help keep supply chains — whether for autos, military missiles or artificial intelligence — stable and productive. ❖

Brian A. Howey is senior writer and columnist for Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs. Find Howey on Facebook and X @hwypol.

Poll, from page 1

The State Affairs/Howey Politics Indiana poll, conducted by SurveyUSA, surveyed 700 Indiana adults on April 4-7 (447 respondents were likely to vote in the primary, with a margin of error of 4.47 percentage points). The sample was prescreened to exclude those who were not registered to vote and those who identified as Democrats, as Democratic-leaning independents or as independents. Thus, all 700 were identified as being registered to vote; of the registered voters, 17% were determined to be independents who lean Republican, 52% to be Republicans and 30% to be strong Republicans.

“That is what we call a very commanding lead, where he’s 4-to-1



greater above each of the opponents,” pollster Ken Alper, president of SurveyUSA, said of Sen. Braun’s strength. “He’s well ahead among every demographic. It looks like it might be closest to moderates, but it’s more than 2-to-1 where he’s at 38% among moderates, while it’s 16% for Suzanne Crouch.

“It’s sort of a blowout,” Alper said of Braun’s lead in the poll, “so there’s not a lot of hope for the other candidates.”

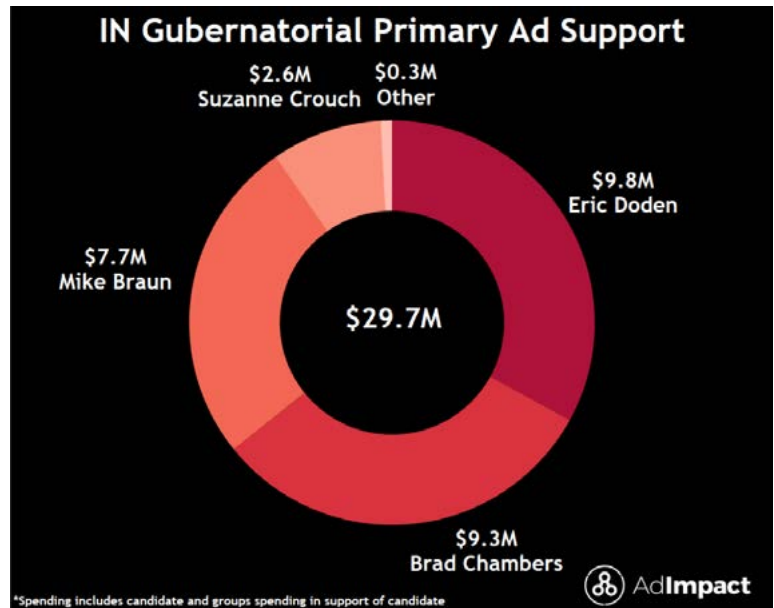
Braun led with 47% among very conservative respondents, 44% among conservatives and 38% among moderates, with 23% undecided. He attracted 38% of support among women, compared to 10% for Crouch. Among voters who said the economy was the most important issue, Braun had 78% credibility. And he received 69% credibility among those who consider the southern border the most important issue.

Alper said of the 26% undecided: “You do have roughly 1 in 4 voters who say they are undecided. We find a lot of the time people who tell us they are likely and then who say they are undecided are people who have actually rethought how likely they are to actually vote. A lot of them will end up not voting, but more often than not those who do intend to vote break pretty much the same way as deciding voters.”

In addition, the poll shows that 51% of respondents are unfamiliar with Crouch. That’s despite the fact that she has served for more than seven years as lieutenant governor and almost a decade in the Statehouse, where she also did a stint as state auditor. Chambers (61% not familiar) and Doden (60%) paled to the just 16% who were not familiar with Sen. Braun, who also received “very favorable” or “somewhat favorable” opinions from a combined 59% of respondents. Crouch had a 30% favorable rating.

Despite veering to the right during this primary sequence, Crouch had been raising money from some Democratic and independent women. We asked Alper whether Crouch would have had a stronger survey showing if the poll had included more than Republicans or GOP-leaning independents.

“She probably would have done a little bit better, but without a really hard, boots-on-the-ground effort to get Democrats to vote in the Republican primary, for the most part they just won’t,” Alper said. “Maybe 5%, maybe 7% to 10% if there’s a push and a backer. It’s not too surprising to say that even people who follow politics enough to vote aren’t paying attention enough to know who their lieutenant governor is. Specifically, that’s not someone they’re voting for individually.”



As for the top issues most important to survey respondents this voting year, 77% said the economy was the most important, 68% said the southern border, 43% said crime and only 19% cited abortion.

“You’re not too close to the border, which is interesting,” Alper said of Indiana’s location as a northern state. “It’s such an issue with the campaigns I am not surprised that it sits at 68%, which is one of the top ones. It’s interesting how that has become nationalized all the way up to Indiana. Fentanyl hasn’t, and [those two issues] seem to go hand in hand.”

Alper added, “The economy usually dwarfs absolutely everything else 4 to 1. It is interesting to me that the border [as an issue] is so high in Indiana, that the border is so close to the economy, and crime isn’t.”

On whether the U.S. is on the right or wrong track, 87% of survey respondents said the latter, with only 8% saying the nation was doing well. And 43% think Indiana is headed in the right direction, while 39% said it’s on the wrong track.

Also, regarding the question, “Compared to four years ago, are you better off today? Worse off? Or are things about the same for you?” some 63% said they were worse off, 10% said better off and 27% said about the same.

“That’s interesting and a good way to look at the difference between the two,” Alper said of the first two right/wrong-track

Poll, from page 4

numbers. “Wow, 8% saying the U.S. is in the right direction versus 43% for Indiana. That’s one of the largest differences on that [question] that we’ve ever seen. Roughly two-thirds are saying they are worse off, and of those who are saying they are better off ... obviously they are a smaller number of people. Chambers voters are twice as likely to say they are better off than Braun voters at 26% versus 10%.”

Respondents gave presumed Republican presidential nominee Donald J. Trump a combined 83% approval, compared to 17% unfavorable, which is in line with recent primary states where Nikki Haley is still drawing some GOP votes despite having dropped out of the race in March. President Joe Biden is under water with Hoosier Republicans — 82% of respondents have a “very unfavorable” opinion of him despite the billions of dollars in federal infrastructure and pandemic relief funding rural broadband expansion, highway and bridge repairs, and the regional READI grants.

Crouch had hoped to be in second place at this point in the campaign, poised for a final breakout with \$5 million to spend on a final media push. That strategy hinged on Chambers and Doden attacking Braun, thus softening him up. Crouch has not aimed any advertising at Braun to date. Alper said the 2% separating Crouch from Chambers and Doden was “negligible” after he was asked about which candidate was best poised to break out.

“The difference between 8% and 10% is really negligible,” Alper said. “It could be any of those three: Chambers, Crouch or Doden. Being a month out [from the primary] there would have to be a pretty significant stumble to cause a change in this,” he said, underscoring the widespread observation going into this election cycle that this was Sen. Braun’s race to lose.

An epic “stumble” occurred in the 2012 U.S. Senate race between Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly and Republican Richard Mourdock, who tripped up during a statewide debate question on the abortion issue. The Donnelly-Mourdock race had been within the margin of error of every media, internal and advocacy group poll before the fateful Oct. 23 debate in New Albany. When the Howey Politics/DePauw Poll did its final survey, Donnelly jetted out to an 11% lead at 47%-36% on the way to a 5% upset plurality that November.

The final GOP gubernatorial debate will happen April 23 under the direction of the Indiana Debate Commission.

On Tuesday, the political action committee ReCenter Indiana announced it had placed three billboards in Evansville and



Merrillville saying the Republican gubernatorial primary is open to Democrats and independent voters. Other billboards are planned for next week along Interstate 465 and North Keystone Avenue in Indianapolis. As part of a multilevel media campaign, ReCenter Indiana is running billboards across Indiana to supplement digital ads to urge Democrats to make a difference in the May 7 primary.

Don Knebel, a former longtime Barnes & Thornburg attorney and now president of ReCenter Indiana, said, “The May primary is the election that determines which Republican will be on the ballot in the fall. Judging from our state’s recent history, whoever that is will likely be our next governor.” ♦

Holcomb remains popular, but successors don't embrace

BY TOM DAVIES

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb remains popular among Republicans, according to a State Affairs/Howey Politics Indiana poll, even as the GOP candidates to take his place have kept their political distance from him.

The polling results released Thursday show Holcomb with an overall positive job-approval rating of 69% among self-identi-

fied Republicans and Republican-leaning independents.

The results found 23% strongly approving of Holcomb’s seven-plus years as governor, with 46% saying they somewhat approved. The poll found 15% somewhat disapproved and 7% disapproved of Holcomb, with 9% unsure. Holcomb’s approval rating among those Republicans topped the 59% for U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, who is running for governor, and 55% for U.S. Todd Young, who easily won

reelection two years ago. Former President Donald Trump had an 83% approval/17% disapproval mark.

Despite the positive approval rating for Holcomb as he nears the end of his second term as governor, none of the six candidates running for the Republican nomination has embraced him.

Asked during a March 26 debate to grade Holcomb's time as governor, Braun gave him a "B-minus"; Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch responded, "With the economy that would be an 'A.' With COVID, that would be a 'C.'" Eric Doden gave no grade.

Brad Chambers, who served as Holcomb's state commerce secretary, gave his former boss an "A" but has focused his campaign on presenting himself as an "outsider" and citing former Gov. Mitch Daniels — not Holcomb — as a leader he would emulate.

Michael O'Brien, who was Holcomb's 2016 campaign manager, said those candidates are facing a "loud minority" of Republicans angry with the restrictions Holcomb imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Regardless of what the data shows, the perception is that there's some political risk in wrapping your arms around the current administration," O'Brien told State Affairs. "Other than Braun with Trump and Chambers with Mitch, none of them are really aligning themselves with other officeholders or previous officeholders."

Ken Alper, president of the polling firm SurveyUSA, said Holcomb's approval rating was a "pretty solid number."

"It's not surprising to see a governor, in general, to be doing significantly better than senators," Alper said. "I think people are often much happier with the way their state is run than the way the federal government is running."

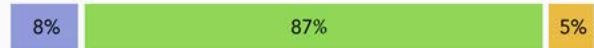
Holcomb's continued solid approval rating

RIGHT TRACK / WRONG TRACK / WORSE OFF

STATE AFFAIRS
stateaffairs.com

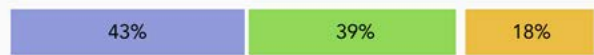
Are things in the United States headed in the right direction? Or are things off on the wrong track?

UNITED STATES



Are things in Indiana headed in the right direction? Or are things off on the wrong track?

INDIANA



Right Wrong Unsure

Compared to four years ago, are you better off today? Worse off? Or are things about the same for you?

YOU



Better Off Worse Same Unsure

Source: SurveyUSA; 700 pre-screened Republican and Republican-leaning independent adults.



comes at a time when Trump is generally the only politician getting high marks among Republicans, said O'Brien, who is president of the Statehouse lobbying firm 1816 Public Affairs Group and is supporting Crouch's gubernatorial campaign.

"Eric Holcomb is not a 'red meat, go pound on the podium, yell at the federal government' kind of guy," O'Brien said. "He's just more measured in nature. He's trying to get consensus. He's not the last angry man in politics, and that's just kind of the environment we're in."

The approval ratings come from a survey of 700 Republicans or Republican-leaning independents conducted April 4-7 by SurveyUSA. The margin of error on those questions was 3.8 percentage points.



Holcomb, from page 6

Among other State Affairs/Howey Politics Indiana poll results:

■ On whether Indiana is heading in the right direction, 43% of respondents said the state was on the right track, while 39% responded that it was on the wrong track. For the country as a whole, 87% said the U.S. was on the wrong track, with 8% supporting the nation's direction.

■ Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Banks is largely unknown among GOP voters despite his commanding position to succeed Braun in the U.S.

Senate and being unopposed on the May 7 primary ballot. The poll found 55% of respondents were not familiar with Banks, while 34% had a favorable opinion of him, compared to 10% unfavorable.

■ Former Vice President Mike Pence remains mostly popular among Indiana Republicans — although far behind Trump. Pence was regarded favorably by 62%, with 34% disapproval. Trump had an 83% approval mark. ♦

Horse Race: Kavanaugh leads CD8 media buys

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — Voters in the Evansville and Terre Haute media markets are hearing and seeing TV ads from previously unknown Dominick Jack Kavanaugh (pictured right), who leads the TV advertising race in the 8th Congressional District Republican primary.

According to AdImpact, Kavanaugh leads the GOP field in spending with \$810,000 in media buys, almost double that of state Sen. Mark Messmer (\$484,000) and the \$215,000 spent by Dr. Richard Moss. There has also been \$421,000 spent by an independent group opposing former Congressman John Hostettler, who has not made any media buys.



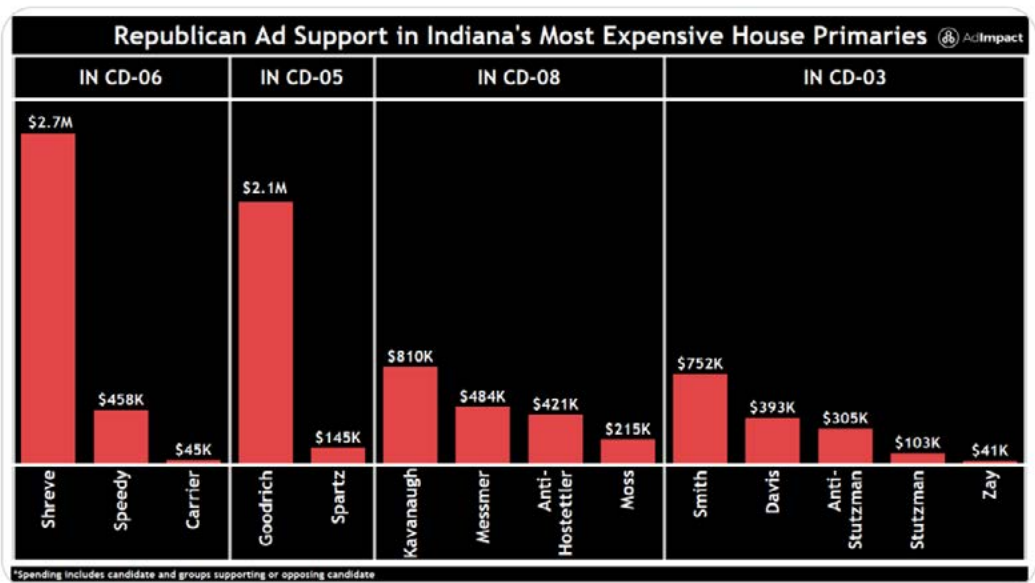
The Republican Jewish Coalition went live with a new television ad Wednesday morning supporting Messmer, the Capital Chronicle reported. It is part of a \$1 million ad buy meant to oppose opponent John Hostettler. "While Democrats continue to endorse and embrace anti-Israel candidates across the country, the RJC and Republican Party stand up to them wherever possible," Coalition CEO Matt Brooks said. "In the race for Congress, conservative Republican Mark Messmer stands out: A life-long Hoosier, Mark Messmer is a small businessman who will work tirelessly in Congress to secure the border and build President Trump's wall," the ad says. "Messmer's been endorsed by numerous local sheriffs and police chiefs because of his



strong stands against illegal immigration. Conservative Mark Messmer for Congress."

According to Ballotpedia, Kavanaugh is a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve and worked in former President Donald Trump's White House in the Office of Press and Communications. Kavanaugh, who lives in Evansville after graduating from LSU, said he's "running for Congress ... to bring a fresh perspective from the next generation of Hoosier leaders."

In the 3rd, 5th and 6th CDs, self-funding candidates are leading in the TV ad wars.



Indiana's House primaries have seen \$9.2 million in ad spending, with all but \$20,000 from Republican advertisers, according to AdImpact on April 5.

■ In CD 6, Republican Jefferson Shreve has spent \$2.7 million, compared to \$458,000 for state Rep. Mike Speedy and Jamison Carrier, the Greenwood businessman who has spent \$45,000. This comes after Shreve spent \$14 million running unsuccessfully for mayor of Indianapolis in 2023.

■ In CD 5, state Rep. Chuck Goodrich has spent \$2.1 million in TV ads, compared to \$145,000 for U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz, who has the ability to self-fund. Spartz won a crowded 2020 GOP primary by spending more than \$1 million of her own money. According to AdImpact, none of the other Republicans had made media buys as of April 5.

■ In CD 3, Fort Wayne businessman Tim Smith has spent \$752,000, compared to \$393,000 for former Allen County Judge Wendy Davis, \$103,000 for former Congressman Marlin Stutzman, and \$41,000 for state Sen. Andy Zay. An anti-Stutzman PAC has spent \$305,000 against his candidacy.

CD 3: Republicans debate

Most of the Republican candidates appeared at a debate in Angola last week. Mike Marturello of the Angola Herald Republican observed of the four leading contenders:

[Stutzman] highlighted his experience in government and business. He had served in the Indiana House and Senate before getting elected to Congress in 2010. He left Congress in 2017 after losing the Republican nomination for Senate to now-Sen. Todd Young, R-Indiana, in 2016.

“One of the reasons that I believe I’m the best candidate to serve in Washington again is because I served here in Indiana when we were billions of dollars in debt when Mitch Daniels took office (as governor) back in 2004.

“I was in the Statehouse, and with real strong leadership, we turned this state around. From 2004 on, Indiana has had a triple A rating. We have a fully funded roads program, which again is going to continue to need support and help as the state grows,” Stutzman said.

[Davis] discussed her pro-life stance and endorsements and how her hands were tied at times when it came to dealing with illegal immigrants while serving on the bench.

“I know how our immigration statute is written and I know what needs to be done. As a judge, I could not be political. But here’s what I saw. I was the judge in the Circuit Court, which is the largest court in northeast Indiana. I am the only candidate I believe that has dealt with every issue in America head on,” Davis said.

[Zay] emphasized his experience in state government and balancing budgets. Zay noted how he is the only candidate currently serving as an elected official. He holds the Senate seat once held by U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, R-Columbia City, who is the lone candidate running for the Republican nomination for the seat being vacated by Braun.

“Legislating is important. It is an art. It’s not just saying no. It’s bringing people together. It’s driving towards the solutions, being creative and grabbing on like a pitbull to bring people around that,” Zay said.



[Smith] argued for a business-oriented approach to end the federal government’s focus on “wokeness” and “liberal messes.” He also spoke about his experience working in mental health and his business that provides mental health services.

“I’m running for Congress to expand freedom.

Horse Race, from page 8

That’s economic freedom because of debt. It’s business freedom. I’m running for Congress to end wokeness,” Smith said. “I’m distinguished because I want to be a business person who takes common sense business principles to Washington and I want to end the wokeness the liberal mess that our federal government has been.”

U.S. Senate

Carmichael launches video

Democratic Senate candidate Marc Carmichael launched a video this past week. He noted that when serving in the Indiana House, he was on the Ways & Means Committee, where he “worked across the aisle to get things done.” He talked of his children and grandchildren, saying he’s running for the Senate “because I’m concerned about their future. I’m concerned about the erosion of women’s rights in this country.” He says he’ll support limiting the sale of military weapons and assault rifles and backs universal background checks. He also backs “Medicare for all.” The video can be seen at marcforindiana.com.



McCray receives Hall Award

Dr. Valerie McCray, a Democratic U.S. Senate candidate from Indiana, on Saturday will receive the 2024 Chairman Award from the Katie Hall Educational Foundation. McCray is receiving the award for public service. She is the first African American woman to qualify to run for the U.S. Senate in Indiana’s history. “I am honored to be among the outstanding public servants who paved the path I walk on,” McCray said. “Congresswoman Katie Hall, who led the efforts on the floor of the U.S. House in 1983 to make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday a national holiday, was powerful beyond measure. The Katie Hall public service award will be, by far, the most treasured award I will ever receive. It gives me the strength and fortitude to push through to the victory that our community so desperately needs and deserves.”

Governor

Large donations

The parents of Eric Doden have given his campaign another \$1 million, while Brad Chambers gave his campaign another \$500,000. Here are April large donations made to Republican gubernatorial candidates:

■ **Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch:** Richard Keith Buyers \$50,000 (April 9); L. Steve Miller \$10,000 (April 9); Bashar Hamimi \$5,000 (April 9); Adam Hill \$5,000 (April 9); Indiana Builders Political Action Committee \$10,000 (April 4); Jacqueline Gibson \$7,500 (April 4); Kenneth Depasse \$7,500 (April 4); Committee to Elect Jon Ford \$2,500 (April 4); Jeffrey Kittle

\$5,000 (April 4); Peter Baranay \$2,500 (April 3); William Critser \$2,500 (April 2); Gary Materials LLC \$2,500 (April 3).

■ **Doden:** Andy Brooks \$5,000 (April 9); Daryl and Brenda Doden \$1 million (April 1).

■ **U.S. Sen. Mike Braun:** Nicholas Rader \$2,500 (April 9); Christopher Dischinger \$10,000 (April 5); Chris Coyle \$25,000 (April 4); John R. Hammond III \$5,000 (April 4); Kimball Morris \$5,000 (April 4); Weston Property Management \$30,000 (April 4); Sharon Hancock \$5,000 (April 2); Indiana American Water PAC \$2,500 (April 2).

■ **Chambers:** Bradley Chambers \$500,000 (April 8); Russell Development Co. \$5,000 (April 8); United Development \$5,000 (April 8); William Kortepeter \$5,000 (April 8); Charlotte Lippert \$2,500 (April 4); Scott Carter \$10,000 (April 2).

Statewides

Rokita files for reelection

Attorney General Todd Rokita filed for reelection with the necessary paperwork and filing fee at Indiana’s Republican Party headquarters. He will now appear on the party’s nomination convention ballot. Rokita entered 2024 with \$1 million cash-on-hand for his campaign and will report more cash-on-hand in the coming days.



“We have had tremendous success in the Attorney General’s Office, but there is more work to do. We must continue standing up for Hoosiers’ rights and liberties, defend our citizens from criminals who wish to be set free, protect consumers and challenge President Biden and his allies who want open borders, job-killing red tape and extreme woke ideology in our classrooms,” Rokita said. Rokita outlined some of the many successes from his first term in office:

- A 100% success rate in jury trials defending Indiana’s interests
- Over \$1 billion in legal settlements for taxpayers in three years, a state record
- Significant appellate court wins keeping criminals behind bars
- Helping shut down a Chinese Communist Party-funded Confucious Institute in Indiana
- Safeguarding women’s sports from unfair male competition
- Returning a record \$81 million-plus in unclaimed property in one year
- Challenging the Biden administration’s WOTUS [Waters of the United States] rules, which would harm farmers and agricultural industry jobs
- Recovering millions of tax dollars from welfare fraud and theft
- Creating the Parents Bill of Rights
- Defending the Second Amendment rights of Hoosiers
- Suing Google for privacy concerns and receiving a \$700 million settlement

General Assembly

HD29: Police endorse Shonkwiler

Alaina Shonkwiler received the backing of two critical law enforcement groups in Hamilton County — Noblesville Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #198 and Hamilton County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #103. “The Noblesville Fraternal Order of Police stands with Alaina Shonkwiler for State Representative, because Alaina stands with us,” Sgt. David Barnes, president of Noblesville FOP Lodge #198, said in a statement. “Our officers know Alaina and her incredible family, we know Alaina’s heart for public service, and her heart for those in uniform and OUR families. It is crucial for us to have a strong partner for the law enforcement community in the State Legislature, and I know Alaina is the tough-on-crime partner we need. She will always have our backs, and we have hers.”

SD34: Democrats set caucus

Following the passing of state Sen. Jean Breaux, Indiana Democratic Party Chair

Mike Schmuhl called a caucus of precinct committee persons for 7 p.m. on April 18 at the Julia Carson Government Center, 300 E. Fall Creek Parkway, in Indianapolis.

Fort Wayne mayoral

Crandall declares

Stephanie Crandall, a longtime member of Mayor Tom Henry’s cabinet, officially filed paperwork for the vacancy to be filled in the upcoming Democratic Mayoral Caucus.



Crandall advocates for the City of Fort Wayne on the local, state, national and international levels as the city’s director of intergovernmental affairs, a role she has held under Mayor Henry since 2013. “The years of experience I’ve had working with and learning from Mayor Henry have

prepared me to carry on his vision as we focused on community initiatives to serve the people of Fort Wayne, including sustainability efforts, resources for people with substance use disorder, and housing options for our neighbors who need more affordable, accessible, or basic housing,” said Crandall in a statement. “I will build on his legacy of creating spaces where we can gather and connect by delivering on HOPE: Health, Opportunity, and Prosperity for Everyone.”

Councilman Paddock won’t run

Councilman Geoff Paddock will not seek the mayoral nomination. “After careful consideration, I have decided not to become a candidate for mayor of Fort Wayne in the upcoming Democratic Party Precinct Caucus

on April 20,” Paddock said in a statement to Howey Politics Indiana.

“I worked closely with Mayor Tom Henry for 12 years on a number of important issues and projects for our community. Like Mayor Henry, I have great passion for our city and its people, and I want to continue to work and improve Fort Wayne every day,” Paddock added. “I took a long deliberation and spoke with, or made contact with, almost 50 people. Without exception, all encouraged me to step up and carry on the legacy of our great Mayor. However, I believe that remaining in my current position as a city councilman, is the best step to take for our city and for me. There are a number of good candidates seeking the office of Mayor in the upcoming caucus. I am a voting precinct committeeperson. I know all of them personally, and many are close friends and colleagues. This will be a difficult decision, as there are qualified candidates in the field. Over the past week, I have spoken with many of them, and I will listen intently as the town hall and caucus meetings take place later this month.”

In addition to Crandall, the field for the April 20 caucus now includes Indiana House Minority Leader Phil GiaQuinta, Councilwoman Sharon Tucker (at large), Councilwoman Michelle Chambers (6th District), unsuccessful 2023 mayoral candidate Jorge Fernandez, community liaison Palermo Galindo and Wayne Township Trustee Austin Knox. Horse Race Status: Leans GiaQuinta

Presidential

Pence rebukes latest Trump stance on abortion

Former Vice President Mike Pence rebuked former President Trump’s latest stance on abortion Monday, Axios reported. The presumptive GOP presidential nominee said on Monday that abortion laws should be left to the states to decide, though he did not take a stance on whether he supports a national limit.

“President Trump’s retreat on the Right to Life is a slap in the face to the millions of pro-life Americans who voted for him in 2016 and 2020,” Pence wrote on X. “But today,



too many Republican politicians are all too ready to wash their hands of the battle for life. Republicans win on life when we speak the truth boldly and stand on the principle that we all know to be true — human life begins at conception and should be defended from womb to tomb. However much our Republican nominee or other candidates seek to marginalize the cause of life, I know pro-life Americans will never relent until we see the sanctity of life restored to the center of American law in every state in this country.”

Asked by Fox News for a response to the criticism from Pence, Trump campaign spokesman Steven Cheung replied, “Who?” Trump said in a video posted on his Truth Social site: “My view is now that we have abortion where everybody wanted it from a legal standpoint, the states will determine by vote or legislation or perhaps both, and whatever they decide must be the law of the land. In this case, the law of the state.”

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, told Fox News she was “deeply disappointed” by Trump’s announcement on Monday, arguing his statement was a victory for Democrats. “If successful, they will wipe out states’ rights.” ❖





Dunn: Grading Biden and Trump

BY CRAIG DUNN

CARMEL — In my mind, I am trying to imagine the expression on Mrs. Butler’s face and the tone of her voice as she analyzed her third-grade class’s academic performance every six weeks. She was a tough old bird who rarely smiled, and she possessed a nasally Hoosier twang that could pierce through even the noisiest of classrooms. I can just imagine how she might have summed up the relative performance of Donald Trump and Joe Biden as presidents.

I will never know exactly what she may have given the two presidents on their grade cards, but I will try to look at 12 key economic job performance categories for Trump and Biden and assign them letter grades for their efforts. I will use economic data provided by the FRED system of the Federal Reserve.

■ **Job gains:** Discounting the sudden loss of jobs caused by the pandemic and the sudden gain in employment after the recovery, I would give strong marks to the job markets for both presidents. Trump: B+; Biden: B+

■ **Unemployment rate:** Before the pandemic, unemployment rates were 3.5% under Trump. Since the pandemic, unemployment rates have been as low as 3.5%, but now hover around 3.8% as of March 2024. Trump: B+; Biden: B+

■ **Economic growth:** If economic growth is adjusted for the pandemic, the relative performance of the Trump and Biden administrations is comparable. Trump’s economy grew 14%, including the time of the pandemic, and Biden’s economy has grown nearly 22%, commencing with the bottom of the pandemic. Trump: A+; Biden: A+

■ **Gas prices:** Trump is the brightest student on this subject. His move to open up oil reserves and other supply side strategies definitely brought prices down at the pump. Biden has coupled a war on fossil fuels, with oil and gas shortages accelerated by the Ukraine War into nasty price hikes at the pump. This is the one economic indicator that stares consumers in the face weekly and it isn’t a good look for Joe Biden. To make matters worse, Biden has used the national petroleum reserve to help bring prices down, but has failed to replenish the reserve, thereby endangering our security. Trump: A; Biden: D

■ **Home ownership:** It was definitely easier to afford a home under President Trump. Homes were less expensive and mortgage rates were much lower. Under President Biden, homes have exploded in price and mortgage rates have driven the cost of financing a home beyond the reach of most Americans. Younger generations have been forced to pay increasingly higher rental rates or, God forbid, move back home with mom and dad. Trump: A; Biden: D

■ **Inflation:** President Trump was able to maintain annual inflation rates at 3% or below during his term in office. President Biden has struggled to average about 6% for his inflation rate. Presidents like to twist and turn statistics, but inflation is a key index watched and felt by voting consumers. Trump: A; Biden: D

■ **Interest rates:** This can be a two-edged sword. If you are a saver, then higher in-

terest rates can be beneficial. If you are a net borrower, then higher rates look like a silent thief in the night. Rates have exploded since the low, low Trump era interest rates. Trump: A+; Biden: D

■ **Spending power:** According to the Federal Reserve, Americans have less spending power today than during the Trump administration. There is a clear standard of living difference and Trump is the winner. Trump: B+; Biden: C-

■ **Stock market:** The stock market has been kind to both President Trump and President Biden. Hopefully, the printing of money hasn’t been the only thing bolstering the markets. Trump: B+; Biden: B+

■ **Student loan debt:** This may not even be a fair item to grade the presidents on because reducing student loan debt by arbitrarily canceling loans may reduce the debt, but it sure isn’t the same as having the debt paid down by the borrowers. I’ll look at this grade from the position of a student borrower. Trump: C; Biden: A

■ **Consumer sentiment:** Consumers have been downright despondent under President Biden. For many of the reasons previously noted, Biden consumers are nervous and afraid. The Index of Consumer Sentiment was near 100 during Trump’s administration and is now near 70 for Biden. Not a good look going into an election! Trump: A+; Biden: C-

■ **Federal debt:** If remediation was ever warranted, Trump and Biden would both qualify. Neither president made any serious attempt to rein in the runaway national debt. In addition to poor letter grades, each president deserves the notation of “not trying to improve.” Trump: F; Biden: F

Of course, these are only some of the

grades on the presidential report card. In the coming weeks, we'll look at other subjects and their grades. In addition, the intangibles of citizenship will also figure mightily on the report card. At this moment, both presidents and their respective parties are performing in citizenship well below average and

that is a very low bar. ❖

Craig Dunn is the former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.

Colwell: General Assembly takes a shot at Gary



BY JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND — The bill passed by the Indiana General Assembly to prohibit cities from suing the gun industry is retroactive to Aug. 27, 1999. That's three days before Gary, a city suffering so much long-term from gun violence, sued key players in the gun industry, manufacturers and dealers, for "negligent conduct that contributes to the criminal gun market."

The bill, designed to end Gary's decades-long effort through litigation to stop the free flow of guns to gangs by straw buyers — buyers obtaining weapons for gangs and for others with criminal intent — was sure to pass in Indiana's legislature.

In the prior session, the legislators did away with requirements for gun permits and honored Wayne LaPierre for his over three decades of leading the National Rifle Association. Alas, as the bill to end the Gary lawsuit was moving through the legislature, the honored LaPierre was found liable for violating statutory obligations in NRA leadership. He resigned under fire.

Jurors concluded that LaPierre caused roughly \$5.4 million worth of harm for the financially troubled NRA. He was accused of lavish spending on private flights and personal lifestyle; and approving \$135 million in NRA contracts in exchange for the use of a yacht and free trips to the Bahamas, Greece and other vacation sites.

Even as NRA membership declines and polls show GOP and Democrat support as well as gun owners in general for some gun-abuse restrictions that LaPierre crusaded against as evil, Republican supermajorities in the Senate and the House united in support of ending the Gary lawsuit.

The passage of prohibiting cities, counties or any other local governmental units from bringing or maintaining lawsuits against the gun industry, came just as a judge was ordering a discovery process to require defendants to provide documents that could spotlight illicit transfer of firearms. The bill, signed into law by Gov. Eric Holcomb, gives the power that was taken away from local government solely to Indiana's attorney general.

Attorney General Todd Rokita supported the bill and made clear he has no intention of pursuing what Gary was attempting. Although the Gary suit had survived many efforts to dismiss it, chances of ultimate success weren't bright even before the legislative action to block it. Similar suits brought by other cities around the nation back at the same time all have been dismissed.

Still, some supporters of the bill said that the Gary lawsuit just remaining alive could cause the firearms industry to look critically at Indiana. Oh, no! Could they get mad and stop selling so many guns that go to gangs in Indiana and Chicago?

When the suit was filed, it was based on evidence obtained in an investigation of how easy it was for straw buyers to purchase guns and ammunition from certain licensed gun dealers. Investigators found they could buy even when intentionally acting suspicious or even when suggesting the purchase was for somebody else.

Westforth Sports in Gary was cited in the suit, and that gun dealer has long been alleged by Chicago police to be the source of hundreds of guns recovered after use in violent crime by gang members and others. The store closed last year. The *Chicago Tribune* celebrated with an editorial headlined, "Rest in infamy, Westforth Sports gun store. We're glad to see you go."

The editorial cited a deposition by the store's owner obtained by nonprofit news company ProPublica, in which the owner described an unbelievably shoddy 'system' for determining who could buy guns at his loathsome store."

Maybe there could have been other depositions about shoddy systems in letting guns get into the wrong hands if the Gary suit wasn't killed. There will be attempts yet in court to save it. But the Indiana General Assembly appears to have fired a fatal shot. ❖

Hicks: Midwest and its schools



BY MICHAEL J. HICKS

MUNCIE — A newly released study by economists from Yale University and the University of California San Diego unlocked a key insight into the way the Rustbelt developed. Like most studies, it is just one piece of the puzzle. I found it insightful because it is yet another challenge to the view that attracting capital drives regional economic growth. In other words, jobs follow people; people don't follow jobs.

The study, "Sprouting Cities: How Rural America Industrialized," used recently released individual Census data from 1880 to 1940 in the United States. This allowed the authors to track individual people as they changed occupations and locations. Like many readers, my grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great grandparents are in this data, so it is of special interest to me.

They found that most of the industrialization in the country occurred as a result of factories springing up in rural counties, absorbing local agricultural workers. Over those six decades, only about 10% of industrialization could be explained by cross-state migration of workers.

In the single most mobile decade, 1910 to 1920, only one fifth of industrial employment growth was due to interstate migration of workers. That was the decade that brought us the hit song "How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm (After They've Seen Paree)?" This song was oddly prescient given agricultural employment in the United States dropped by half over the following 20 years.

This study was an enormous undertaking, since it had to match people across decades, which involved about half a billion Census records. Those were only recently computerized from handwritten entries. To give some sense of the challenge, my happily simple surname apparently changed from Hicks to Hix and back to Hicks over this time period. Goodness knows how they handled the Vongroßsteinhausen or Postlethwaite families.

I particularly appreciated this work, in part because it rejects a common view that factories came to the Midwest because of canals and rivers, gas or oil, railroads or other natural resources. This study supports my argument that the Midwest became the factory center of the world because it was teeming with educated, healthy workers. Here's that story.

The Midwest was settled from 1790 to about 1840, first by land grants to Revolutionary War veterans, then to immigrants from northern Europe. This region was settled under the Northwest Ordinance, which set aside land that would generate revenues for local schools. The language on education in that ordinance lives on in state constitutions, including Indiana's. The Midwest built schools everywhere, for everyone. Many persisted until the 1940s, including one in Rome, Indiana, which my father attended, and another in Economy, Indiana, where my wife's aunt taught in the early 1930s. The best evidence is that Indiana was universally literate before England. That's a monumental human achievement.

The land grants were modest. Privates and noncommissioned officers received 100

acres. Thus, within three generations, the population outstripped the ability of them to financially support those families. So, shortly after the Civil War, the Midwest found itself in an unusual position. We had more people than the land could easily support, but nearly everyone could read, write and do basic arithmetic.

In the humble Midwest, in places like Howard, Delaware or Henry counties, the perfect combination of learning and skills matched the demands of the mid-industrial revolution. The schooling was surprisingly robust. It's worth noting that among Indiana's great early authors — Lew Wallace, James Whitcomb Riley, Edward Eggleston and Gene Stratton-Porter — none progressed beyond eighth grade. They were savants, but literacy was widespread and more than sufficient for the jobs that lay in the distant future. Everyone could read, and did.

The math was rigorous as well. One eighth-grade question in 1895 read, "District No. 33 has a valuation of \$35,000. What is the necessary levy to carry on a school seven months at \$50 per month, and have \$104 for incidentals?" That is algebra and about what is necessary for most jobs even today.

Here, basic schooling was matched by practical experience on the farm. The physics of water pumps, the calibration of a hit-and-miss engine and the calculation of seed requirements all demanded practical skills. I don't suggest all students could write like Wallace or perform algebra like today's high school students. But by global standards of 1880 to 1940, small Midwestern towns were a gold mine of human capital.

As soon as the Industrial Revolution took hold in the United States, its movement to the Midwest was inevitable. Of course, other factors played a role in what would be manufactured in the Midwest and in which county it might be produced. Natural gas, oil and waterways

Hicks, from page 14

all drove the final locations for many industries. But if it wasn't glass in Muncie, it would be something else. It was always the people who drew in the factories.

There was perhaps a period, from 1945 to the 1960s, where attracting a business would've meant population and employment growth. But then it only really mattered in the South and Southwest. There is very little evidence that the hundreds of billions of dollars in tax incentives, or tens of billions of site-specific infrastructure spending, created a single enduring job in the Midwest.

The Yale-UCSD paper held one more big insight beyond the initial development of these local factory towns. The new cities formed from this concentration of agricultural workers into new manufacturing towns haven't fared well since. As it turns out, most of these places failed to expand "consumer" services as their cities grew. When the factories closed, they could not sustain their population. Most readers will recognize that "consumer services" represent some key elements of quality of life. These consumer services include retail trade, entertainment and other personal services. The cities that thrived had an abundance of these quality-of-life businesses to keep residents. There's more than that to a successful quality of life strategy, including good schools and a high-functioning local government. Those things are themselves necessary for good consumer services

firms to consider locating in a city.

We are in the midst of a gubernatorial election that will direct our economic development policy for most of the next decade. Thus far, much of the debate has been about how best to attract new jobs to Indiana. The real discussion should be how we make more cities people want to live in. Over the past century and a half, all our great economic successes in the Midwest have come from doing so. Likewise, almost all our failures have come from not doing so. ❖

Michael J. Hicks, Ph.D., is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University.



Marcus: Hoosier housing costs below U.S. norms

BY MORTON J. MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS — Last week in this space we wrote: In 2022, the average Hoosier worker had a wage of \$67,088, 33rd highest in the nation. This level of income permits her/him to buy the same basket of goodies as \$73,067 buys in Averageton, USA.

That statement supports our Hoosier article of faith: It's cheaper to live here than most other places in the United States. It doesn't mean we live better, just spending less of our income than folks in other states to satisfy our cravings for the goodies of the marketplace.

There's still more evidence. Indiana's median household income in 2022 was the 13th lowest in the nation. Likewise, our median housing costs were the 13th lowest among the 50 states. Our household income level was 11% below the national median and our housing costs were 24% below the comparable national figure.

Taken together, our median household income of \$66,785 and our median housing costs (owners and renters combined) of \$11,640 means we spent 17.4% of income on housing, the seventh-lowest percentage in the nation. That 17.4% of income going for housing costs in Indiana was 14.2% for homeowners and 29.4% for renters. Home owners account for 71% of occupied housing units in the state, with a balance of 29% of units rented. These numbers tell us the relative cost of renting is twice that of home owning —

29.4% being more than twice 14.2%. Nationally, the corresponding figures are similar but higher at 31.7% for renters and 16.2% for homeowners. In addition, when examined in detail, the 2022 American Community Survey reported that 49% of renters and 17% of Indiana homeowners spent more than 30% of their respective incomes on housing.

Is this evidence of a housing shortage? Of the households spending 30% or more on housing, 106,200 (16%) have incomes of more than \$50,000 a year. And the remaining 577,500 households are not without housing. Setting aside legitimate questions of what is meant as income and what is meant as the cost of housing, we should ask: What is this 30% of income rule?

Why is 30% a line in the sand a standard accepted by lenders and housing advocates alike? That figure is like the federal poverty line created one weekend in the early 1960s by a group of federal statisticians and adjusted subsequently, but never challenged.

The 30% of income line was originally 25% for renters of public housing nearly 60 years ago. It was raised because of rising housing prices. A shortage means the quantity demanded by consumers exceeds the amount offered by sellers at a given price. Could it be that consumers are wanting too much, too many amenities, so much more floor space? Maybe, but to challenge consumer sovereignty is a form of treason for which I do not wish to be charged. ❖

Sabato: Arizona's new abortion landscape

BY J. MILES COLEMAN

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — As with 2022, the fight for abortion rights is shaping up to be a defining issue of the 2024 election cycle. On Tuesday, the swing state of Arizona made national news on that front.

In 2022, then-Gov. Doug Ducey (R) signed legislation prohibiting abortions past the 15th week of pregnancy. But earlier this week, the state Supreme Court, a body made up of entirely GOP-appointed judges, went even further: it ruled that an 1864 law, dating back to the state's territorial days, that bans abortions in nearly all cases could be enforced. With this ruling, Arizona will effectively have the strictest abortion ban of any state that Joe Biden carried in 2020.

In the immediate aftermath of the state court's ruling, leading Arizona politicians reacted about as expected. Gov. Katie Hobbs and state Attorney General Kris Mayes, both Democrats, vowed to fight the ruling—the latter said she would decline to enforce the 1860s-era law, although lower-level prosecutors may not take their cues from her. As an aside, we often bring up Mayes's election as an example of why "every vote matters." In 2022, Mayes's result made Biden's 10,000-vote margin in Arizona from 2020 look like a landslide: She defeated a pro-Trump candidate, Abe Hamadeh, by less than 300 votes out of more than 2.5 million cast (Hamadeh is now running for Congress in the 8th District). Counterintuitively, and as Republican lobbyist Liam Donovan notes, Mayes's positioning may be helping Republicans at the margins—had a relative handful of votes gone the other way, Hamadeh would now be in a position of enforcing a law that works against his party politically.

The sentiments of Hobbs and Mayes have been echoed by Rep. Ruben Gallego (D, AZ-3), Democrats' likely nominee in the state's open-seat race for Senate. Gallego's probable general election opponent, Kari Lake, has changed her tune from 2022, when she was the GOP's losing nominee for governor. In a statement, Lake criticized the court's ruling despite voicing her support for the 1864 law on multiple occasions during her run for governor.

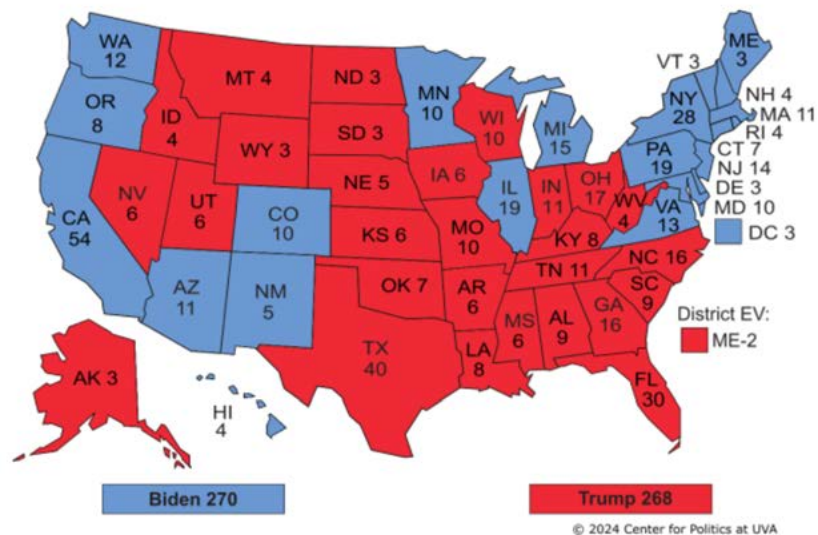
Even before today, we have been wondering whether Arizona's race truly belongs in the Toss-up category. Though the other two states in the category, Montana and Ohio, feature Democratic incumbents, their partisan fundamentals are considerably friendlier to Republicans. Although we've yet to see Lake's latest fundraising numbers, Gallego's own fundraising picked up noticeably in the first quarter of this year. While we aren't announcing any changes today, it's easy to see how any

backlash from the state Supreme Court's decision could play in Gallego's favor.

Lake's pivot, an indication that she realizes the court's conclusion may have toxic political implications for state Republicans, also mirrors what her hero, former President Donald Trump, has attempted at the national level. Even while Trump has run best with very conservative Republicans during the (technically ongoing) primary season, he has appeared to trim his sails on the abortion issue. Last year, Trump criticized the six-week ban that Gov. Ron DeSantis, then one of his rivals for the Republican nomination, put into place in Florida



Map 1: Hypothetical scenario with Arizona providing Biden's 270th electoral vote



as a "terrible mistake." More recently, Trump praised the Supreme Court's Dobbs ruling not because it could be seen as a stepping stone towards a national ban but because it returned the question of abortion to the states.

Just as some GOP governors pounced on Trump's attack on DeSantis's law, his

recent comments were met with criticism from some leading anti-abortion groups. As political analyst Drew Savicki pointed out, Trump's trajectory on the issue probably reflects the fact that he is personally not as ideological as other Republicans and seems better attuned to some post-Dobbs electoral realities than some of the "true believers" on his side. But the Biden campaign, of course, is still working to lay the Dobbs ruling at Trump's feet, and Trump has often celebrated the ruling, creating fodder for Democratic ad-makers. Any additional focus on abortion rights is likely good for Democrats given that their position on the issue is just closer to where most voters are at than the Republicans' position, particularly after Dobbs.

A Florida detour

Trump's comments were, at least in part, a response to another notable abortion-related development that came in his adopted home state. Earlier this month, the Florida state Supreme Court — a body that, like its counterpart in Arizona, is composed solely of Republican-appointed judges — declined to block two measures that will appear on the November ballot.

As of now, this news has not changed our basic outlook in Florida. Although the Biden campaign has signaled that it sees the state as winnable—it has already run ads there, for instance—Florida is an expensive state were Democrats have a lot to prove. In past cycles, Floridians have also proved willing to simultaneously back liberal ballot positions and conservative candidates: in 2014, then-Gov. Rick Scott (R) was reelected as an amendment which would have legalized medical marijuana took 58%, although it fell short of the 60% share that is required for such amendments to pass in Florida.

As we keep our Likely Republican rating for both its presidential and Senate contests in place, we would basically defer to state mapper Matthew Isbell's recent Substack edition on the topic. While the ballot questions will bring some potential upside for Democrats in Florida, much will depend on both how the amendments are messaged (namely, how well Democrats can tie abortion to Trump) and the national mood later this year.

Why Arizona matters (and why it could matter even more)

Though it is not official yet, it seems likely that Arizona will also have a similar measure on its fall ballot. A coalition of abortion rights advocates in the state are petitioning for a ballot question that would protect access to abortion — with a July submission deadline, they claim they already have more than the required number of signatures.

The (potential) forthcoming constitutional amendment vote, and just the general fallout in Arizona surrounding the state high court's verdict, will likely motivate Democratic voters in this marginal state. Still, as we have frequently done, we'd caution Democrats not to take anything for granted. Last year, we took an exhaustive look at post-Dobbs abortion ballot measures across the country: though the pro-abortion rights side has prevailed in each instance, their position has almost always run ahead of what Democrats earned in key races. A rare exception to this trend came last year in Kentucky — Gov. Andy Beshear's (D) reelection margin was slightly stronger than the margin by which the pro-abortion rights side prevailed in a 2022 vote there (but they were

on the ballot in different years). But it's easy to imagine usual Republican voters in Arizona (and Florida) voting yes on abortion rights but also supporting GOP candidates in actual partisan races.

It seems possible that Republicans in the state legislature seek to revive the 15-week ban — and thus, theoretically, mitigating backlash to the court's ruling—but it's not clear such a solution is feasible. As local reporter Brahm Resnik points out, Republicans have just bare majorities in either chamber of the legislature and some of their more conservative members are on board with the court's verdict.

Though we have talked mostly in the context of federal-level races so far, this week's ruling could also hurt Republicans in Arizona's legislative races, where they are defending some members in seats that Hobbs carried.

Finally, as a closing thought, one other state that has made news for its legislative happenings in recent weeks is Nebraska. Trump and some other notable state Republicans—including Gov. Jim Pillen (R) and Rep. Don Bacon (R, NE-2)—pushed to scrap the state's current congressional district-based electoral vote allocation in favor of a winner-take-all format. As has been the case for several decades, only Maine and Nebraska operate under the former system.

2020 was the first presidential election in which both Maine and Nebraska simultaneously split their electoral votes. Still, from a purely mathematical standpoint, the two splits cancelled each other out: as Trump carried Maine's rural 2nd District, Nebraska's Omaha-centric 2nd District flipped to Biden. With current political trends in mind, that split seems likely to represent a "new normal." ❖

Judge sends Noel to jail for contempt

JEFFERSONVILLE — Jamey Noel, the former southern Indiana sheriff facing 25 felony charges, found himself on the receiving end of bold statements from the judge in his case Tuesday, who found Noel in contempt of court (**WHAS-TV**). Noel appeared in Clark County Circuit Court Tuesday for a contempt of court hearing stemming from firearms found inside his residence during a recent search warrant. When Noel posted bond in November following his arrest, Special Judge Larry Medlock ordered him to surrender all firearms, minus one shotgun. Two handguns were found during a March 13 search of his Jeffersonville home. After about three hours of witness testimony and multiple breaks in between, Judge Medlock made his decision with a booming and demonstrative strike of the gavel. “I told Mr. Noel, ‘Don’t do anything stupid. Do not try to deceive me or defy me. You will not like the consequences.’ Today is that day. You are not the law. You don’t interpret the law. You don’t enforce the law. You’re not above the law. I find that you are in contempt of this court. Take him into custody.” Judge Medlock sentenced Noel to 60 days in jail. Noel and the jail he ran as sheriff were featured on the first season of the A&E series “60 Days In.” “What is an appropriate sanction? I can sentence him to up to 180 days without a trial.” Judge Medlock said. “Or I can sentence him to a day, or I could release him. You know what I think the answer is? Sixty days in.” He also said an “independent individual” needs to comb through all of Noel’s properties for firearms before he is released.

Ruling on BMV's non-binary option

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) does not have to issue a nonbinary option on driver’s licenses and

identification cards, per an Indiana Court of Appeals ruling on Tuesday (**Indiana Public Media**). The BMV began recognizing a third gender on licenses with an “X” — meaning “not specified” — in 2019, under an administrative rule. But the next year, then-Attorney General Curtis Hill released an advisory opinion saying the agency didn’t have the authority to do so. In response, the BMV then halted the practice and 13 nonbinary Hoosiers sued. A Monroe County trial judge ruled against the agency, forcing it to reinstate its prior policy of issuing driver’s licenses with an X. Attorney General Todd Rokita’s office then appealed the case to the Indiana Court of Appeals. The trial court decision was reversed unanimously by a panel of three state appellate judges on Tuesday, remanding the case with instructions to dissolve the injunction against the BMV and enter summary and declaratory judgments for the agency consistent with the opinion. “Until the General Assembly determines otherwise, we hold that ‘gender’ in Title 9 of the state statutory scheme means ‘sex,’” Senior Judge Randall Shepard wrote in the opinion for the appellate court.

Warrick accrues \$186K in legal fees

BOONVILLE — According to legal documents, Warrick County Commissioners have accrued \$186,277 in legal fees to Fine & Hatfield from November to February of this year (**WFIE-TV**). Some of those bills were racked up during the 15 days spent in court for a recently decided case over the termination of three former board of health employees. In a release read aloud at Tuesday’s meeting by County Attorney Andrew Skinner, of the very same Fine & Hatfield, Commissioners called that ruling a “clear and decisive victory.” “The ruling brings an end to a prolonged litigation period, during which significant legal costs were incurred. The expense has created an unnecessary burden for the County and its residents.” said Skinner on behalf

of the three commissioners. Documents show large amounts incurred at Fine & Hatfield for dealing with allegations made against commissioners and animal control employees.

Sentencing delayed for Eberhart

INDIANAPOLIS — A judge has pushed back until July former state Rep. Sean Eberhart’s sentencing hearing on federal charges of influencing casino legislation in return for the promise of a \$350,000-a-year job (Davies, **State Affairs**). U.S. District Court Judge Matthew Brookman issued an order last week granting a request from Eberhart’s lawyer to delay the hearing that had been scheduled for April 29. The new sentencing hearing date of July 10 would come more than seven months after Eberhart pleaded guilty in November to a felony charge of conspiracy to commit honest services fraud. His sentencing was originally scheduled for February, but that was also called off following an earlier delay request from Eberhart’s lawyers. The latest request, submitted last week by Eberhart’s defense attorney, Patrick Cotter of Chicago, didn’t give a reason for seeking the delay while saying federal prosecutors didn’t object to it.

New Earlham president named

RICHMOND — A dean from the University of Pennsylvania will soon head to Richmond to take the lead at Earlham College (**Indiana Public Media**). Paul Sniegowski is a biologist and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the Philadelphia school. But he’s also an Indiana native, with degrees in both music and biology from Indiana University. The Earlham Board of Trustees calls Sniegowski a strong researcher and much appreciated academic leader. He becomes the 21st president of Earlham College.