

Democratic Senate race about contrasts

McCray sees need for a woman; Carmichael says it's all about defeating Banks

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — Two election cycles mean a lot when it comes to the Indiana Democratic U.S. Senate nomination.



For Valerie McCray, it was a lesson in political science. She had declared for the 2022 race to challenge U.S. Sen. Todd Young but came up short of the needed ballot petition signatures that February.

needed with time to spare. It was boots on the ground every evening, every weekend.”

The 64-year-old clinical psychologist from Indianapolis added, “Women’s rights are on the table, and I think [the nominee] needs to be a woman. We’ve trusted men all these years, and I think we need women to lead the march on this. We have to be in charge of our own destiny here.”

“Last time we weren’t able to get the signatures,” she told *Howey Politics Indiana* on Tuesday, a week before the May 7 primary election. “This time my volunteers did what we needed to do to comb this state and get the signatures we

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The testosterone ticket

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — If U.S. Sen. Mike Braun secures the Republican gubernatorial nomination next Tuesday and Noblesville pastor Micah Beckwith prevails in his unorthodox quest for the ticket at the June convention, the GOP’s

standard will be a font of testosterone in the so-called Year of the Woman.



Mike Braun, Micah Beckwith, Todd Rokita and Jim Banks.

That would compare to the austere Democratic ticket

CONTINUED ON PG. 2

Quote of the Week

“I don’t think we’re going to have that. I think we’re going to win. And if we don’t win, you know, it depends. It always depends on the fairness of an election.”



Donald J. Trump, when TIME asked if there would be political violence if he lost.

Testosterone, from page 1

headed by Jennifer McCormick, with potential female nominees for lieutenant governor, attorney general and the U.S. Senate.

And here's a canary/coal mine element: Despite open seats for governor, the U.S. Senate and three congressional districts, early voting appears to be very low across the state.

Allen County Republican Chairman Steve Shine told *Howey Politics Indiana* on Wednesday: "So far in Allen County, voter turnout is low compared to 2020 and just low overall. I understand after just speaking to the Election Board that election boards across the state have been communicating, and they all are reporting low turnout. If that trend continues, we'll have a primary with very low turnout but with a high price tag. So for whatever reason, voters are not being motivated to go to the polls at this time."

Why would that be happening with an open governor seat and three congressional districts? Is it Donald Trump's castigating early voting that is in play here? Or that none of these consultant-driven campaigns have captured the imagination of voters? Electing "outsiders" to office is simply not exciting anyone.

Axios reported this morning: After years of calling voting by mail "corrupt" and "crooked," Donald Trump and GOP committees are scrambling to convince their voters that it's safe and secure ahead of the election, Axios' Alex Thompson writes. Democrats have built a large mail-in voting advantage over the GOP in swing states that could decide the election.

That prompted Robert Vane of Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch's Republican gubernatorial campaign to ask about an emerging pattern: "Indiana primaries and campaigns in which one woman runs against multiple men and prevails? [I'm] thinking Carmel and Fort Wayne."

In 2023, Sue Finkam emerged from a three-way primary race to win the Republican Carmel mayoral election. Last month, Fort Wayne

Mayor Sharon Tucker won a Democratic mayoral caucus featuring two women and five men, including House Minority Leader Phil GiaQuinta.

"The polls in the gubernatorial race show the LG as the only person with a real chance of catching/passing Braun," Vane said of Crouch. "Who knows what happens



on Election Day? Are undecided women going to hit the polls — in a low turnout election — and make the difference for Suzanne? Ann DeLaney told me once that one skirt beats a row of slacks every time. ... She may be right yet again."

Informed and reliable *HPI* sources say internal polling for Sen. Braun has revealed him leading with about a 20% margin, with Crouch in second and picking up support. Braun's campaign didn't immediately respond to *HPI's* request to share toplines.

Which brings me to the premise of this column: What would a GOP gubernatorial ticket look like this month?

HPI columnist and Evansville attorney Joshua Claybourn observed that he has been hearing rumors, though nothing credible. "I think the activist efforts to elect Micah Beckwith at the state convention will complicate the nominee's efforts to select their own LG," he said.

In the Aug. 10, 2023, edition of *Howey Politics Indiana*, Crouch said, "It is not my right to choose a lieutenant governor nominee. It is by a vote of the delegates that

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my potential running mate is selected. The fact that several people have expressed interest in joining me in a campaign that will make history is both very flattering and quite encouraging.”

Braun took a more nuanced approach. “Mike Braun is an outsider and comes from Main Street just like the hundreds of grassroots Hoosier conservatives that serve as convention delegates,” campaign senior adviser Josh Kelley told *HPI*. “Mike Braun believes our party and state are stronger when the grassroots has a seat at the table, and he looks forward to working with the delegates next summer to find a lieutenant governor candidate that shares his conservative values and can help further his agenda to make Indiana a beacon of freedom and opportunity.”

Should Crouch pull off an upset next week, her potential running mates would likely include U.S. Rep. Greg Pence and Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen, both of whom have endorsed her.

Eric Doden has long cited his mentor in Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas, though with the Beckwith aim at using the convention to make the ticket, it would be hard to see Costas emerging. He lost a 2008 attorney general nomination when delegates revolted against his candidacy despite the ardent backing of Gov. Mitch Daniels.

Curtis Hill had vowed to reveal his LG pick before the primary but hasn’t done so as of this writing.

As for Sen. Braun, the tea leaves are so tiny as to leave us to speculate.

HPI’s track record on this front has been pretty good. In 2012, after Mike Pence won the nomination, our preliminary list included Banks and Hill, as well as Reps. Wendy McNamara and Sue Ellspermann. “When you look at what Ellspermann has to offer — education, business innovation, rural development, geography, gender — it’s not hard to envision a Pence-Ellspermann ticket,” *HPI* reported in the May 17, 2012, edition. “Our early money is on Ellspermann. She has great credentials across the spectrum and would put a dent in Democratic intentions to regain traction in the southern river counties that used to generate gubernatorial victories.”

In 2004, all clues pointed to state Sen. Becky Skillman, though in the May 13 *HPI* edition, the pick by nominee Mitch Daniels became a two-fer. He announced in Fort Wayne that Skillman would complete his ticket, while Vera Bradley CEO Patricia Miller would head a new Commerce Department.

“Ultimately, my statewide search for the very best among us led me to two finalists, who between them possess all the qualities I had in mind. I have decided to enlist them both,” Daniels said. “First and foremost, of course, I wanted someone who could step in credibly if necessary to the role of governor. More than anything, this requires a knowledgeable and experienced leader who is well known and trusted on both sides of the political aisle.”

Rival media outlets had suggested Braun might select former Congressman Trey Hollingsworth, who would bring a huge checkbook to the campaign. The Braun campaign swatted that one away as mindless speculation, with Kelley saying last August that the reports were “not accurate.”



What would Hollingsworth bring to a Braun administration? Certainly not geographic diversity or working Statehouse relationships.

If Braun is seeking gender, race and geography diversity, a name we’re hearing is 2022 1st CD nominee Jennifer-Ruth Green, a Black woman with military experience. Another is newly appointed state Comptroller Elise Nie-shalla, who hails from Boone County. She lost a 2022 convention race for state treasurer. And there’s U.S. Rep. Erin Houchin, who served several terms in the Indiana Senate.

If gender diversity is not a priority, another name surfacing is Treasurer Daniel Elliott.

If geography and a Statehouse résumé are priorities, La Porte Mayor Tom Dermody might fill the bill. He previously served in the Indiana House. Another mayor to keep an eye on would be Scott Fadness of Fishers, though he has endorsed Brad Chambers.

Stay tuned. ❖

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For Marc Carmichael, Hoosier Democrats may have one shot at defeating Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, who is expected to easily win the nomination and will be favored to win the Senate seat Richard Lugar held for 36 years.

“The party needs a candidate to beat Jim Banks,” Carmichael told HPI on Tuesday. “I appeal to independents and Republicans who are dissatisfied with Jim Banks. We get only one chance. If he wins this year, he’ll be in there for a long time. You really need to think about who can beat Banks.”

Asked why she’s running this year, McCray said, “I’m running because it’s one of the biggest megaphones for what we need to get done. There’s a lot of needles we need to move on health care, on wages, on affordable housing. I started out because this was a mental health thing for me. It’s a priority in Washington, D.C. I’m a psychologist. I work in the trenches in trauma, be it in prisons or the military or the Stop the Violence movement here in Indianapolis. There was a need for me to do something more on a bigger, concrete level as far as policies making sense that are driving some of these issues.

“That’s why I threw my hat in the ring after being out here working in the trenches,” she said.

The societal problems now are so daunting that she decided she needed to get out of the day-to-day scenario. “It’s the biggest megaphone; it’s the biggest ability to impact people,” McCray said. “Try to fix these things one mental health crisis at a time, it’s not the best use of my energy at this time. The best use of my energy is to go help fix things at a broader level.”

Carmichael believes he can pull off the kind of upset he achieved in 1986, when the unknown Democrat defeated Republican Indiana House Speaker J. Roberts Dailey.

“Banks makes it easy because I can use his own words against him,” said Carmichael, who believes the congressman’s base is about 35% to 37% of the electorate. “Do you want a bomb thrower or a guy who works with Sen. Todd Young? I don’t have to make some things up. I don’t have to demagogue.

“We’ve already got a group of prominent Republicans who are going to come out with me,” Carmichael said of a postprimary strategy.

“This won’t turn around before Labor Day,” he said. “Jim Banks has raised \$5 million. All I need is \$2 million. If I can get \$2 million, I can win this race.”

McCray’s agenda

McCray cites mental health and abortion rights as the issues galvanizing Indiana’s female voters.

“We have, as a country, not kept up with the cost of living,” she said. “People are working 40 to 60 hours a week and not making ends meet.

“One of the policies I’ve advocated is a medical system for all, through Medicare or Medicaid,” McCray said. “It makes more



sense financially; it makes more sense for the doctors so they can do their work and for the people so they don’t go broke. It makes more sense for pharmaceuticals so we can be more competitive. There are a lot of countries who pay a lot less for the drugs than we do.”

As for the abortion issue, asked if the second election cycle since the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* ruling in June 2022 was stoking female voters, McCray told HPI: “Absolutely. The women are fired up, and the men who love them are fired up. *Dobbs* caught everyone by surprise. After [50] years of having it in place, we weren’t prepared for the boom, boom, boom effect from the Supreme Court. Now we have to go back and undo, to devolve this.”

She also backs military funding for Ukraine and Israel. “The very premise of a country being taken over by another country, it’s an issue,” she said of Ukraine. “I do support whatever they need. Those folks are fighting a war with little to work with.”

As for the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, she said, “I don’t hold one as more precious than the other. No one is gaining from that situation in Palestine, Israel and Gaza. The Palestinians are traumatized, but so are the Israeli people who have to go in. Their lives will never be the same. I want a cease-fire so both sides can settle and rebuild.”

She said she would have voted for this past winter’s failed bipartisan southern border bill that was opposed by Donald Trump. “I think it was a big move forward,” she said. “It was kind of a put-your-money-where-your-mouth-is. [Republicans] are waiting for Donald Trump to take credit.”

As for how she will present a contrast to Banks, McCray said, “Their party is based on taking away rights and challenging the intellectual community. It’s an attack on education, free speech, on people’s rights. He’s putting up dog whistles. This is a race about the people. It’s not about grandstanding. This is about what the people need, what we need. I’m not a career politician.

“He’s different from me in every way,” she said.

As for Carmichael and winning the primary, McCray said, “Marc was retired. He was living a nice life and fixing a boat. He heard Jim Banks was running and he doesn’t like Jim Banks because he’s a bad guy. [Carmichael] will say that he won a race. He’ll tell you the details of how he won that race. He doesn’t tell you that was 40 years ago.

“The contrast is I didn’t come out of retirement,” McCray said. “I never left the race. I didn’t just put on an LGBTQ pin and say I’m for LGBTQ issues. I’ve helped get trans rights in place. I’ve helped get medications for people. I’ve been in the trenches fighting violence. Several of my clients have been shot several times. I’ve marched on Washington several times for women’s rights. I have never stopped being in the race.”

How will McCray win the primary? “For the primary, it’s totally grassroots,” she said. “It’s about bringing the community together, getting people excited. It’s about being able to excite the base and give people something to vote for. We cannot expect to win if we keep throwing in the same type of people.

“We need females, we need diversity, we want people in the fight and are willing to stay in the fight,” McCray said. “They don’t want the career politician. They want something different, and that’s what our campaign is ready to provide.”

And she describes her campaign, run by mostly women volunteers. “That’s the difference between me and my opponent: He gets more money, but he has to pay for a lot,” she said. “I don’t have a lot of money, but I have a lot of volunteers, and if you

added up everything that they do, we’re into the millions of dollars. They just do what they need to do without the invoice.”

Carmichael’s agenda

Carmichael, 74 and living in Indianapolis, served three terms in the Indiana House representing the Muncie area before becoming director of governmental affairs

for the Indiana Gas Company and then president in 1999 of the Indiana Beverage Alliance, which he described as the trade association for Indiana’s family-owned beer distributors.

“I’m running because I want to be a dignified and dedicated leader serving Indiana and all Hoosiers, in the mold of legislators like Richard Lugar and Lee Hamilton,” he told HPI.

He cited gun violence and vowed to support a ban on assault weapons, calling Banks “the NRA’s poster child.”

On climate change, Carmichael said Banks believes it’s “a hoax.”

On abortion, Carmichael said, “I believe women’s rights are human rights and will work to codify Roe v. Wade.”

He said he’s concerned about “the white nationalism and antisemitism growing in our country thanks to extremists’ ugly rhetoric” and called himself “someone who believes racism is still a cancer on the United States.”

Carmichael said he’ll stand up for the LGBTQ youth “who are being used as political pawns by mean-spirited, calculating



Republicans who needed a new social wedge issue after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned by the Republican Supreme Court majority.

“These vulnerable children deserve our help, not scorn,” he said. “Their health care decisions should be left up to their families and compassionate, qualified doctors, not political opportunists.”

Carmichael also believes teachers and librarians “deserve our help and respect and not the threat of losing their jobs or getting shot. They shouldn’t have to fear being fired over a book or movie.” And he backs the reclassification of marijuana at the federal level from a Schedule 1 to a Schedule 3 drug, which Attorney General

Merrick Garland on Tuesday said the Biden administration would do.

“I’m willing to spend a year of my life to defeat Jim Banks,” Carmichael said, adding that Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. lost to Sen. Young in 2022 “because he was the right person in the wrong race.”

“I’m in the right race,” Carmichael said. ❖

Horse Race: Beckwith claims support of 750 delegates

BY TOM DAVIES and BRIAN A. HOWEY

Micah Beckwith’s tradition-breaking run for lieutenant governor could well be decided in Tuesday’s Republican primary even though his name isn’t on the statewide ballot.



The fate of the outspoken Noblesville pastor’s campaign will hinge on the outcome of races at the bottom of the ballot for the some 1,800 delegates to the Indiana Republican Convention.

If enough Beckwith supporters win, his bid to upend the practice dating six election cycles of letting the Republican nominee for governor decide the No. 2 spot could succeed regardless of whether the nominee wants him.

Beckwith has spent much of the past year on the circuit of Republican county events. He is claiming support from at least 750 delegate candidates, promoting those candidates on social media and maintaining a list on his campaign website.

“I think there’s a lot more than that,” Beckwith told *State Affairs*, “because I’m getting people in counties I go to that will come up to me — I don’t even know who they are — and they’ll say, ‘Hey, we’re following you. We love what you’re doing.

We’re running for delegate and we’d like to support you.”

Beckwith’s appeal to delegates

Beckwith first gained a political following with his 2000 Republican primary run for the 5th Congressional District seat, in which he finished third as Victoria Spartz won the nomination. The pastor of Life Church in Noblesville built an appeal among conservatives through a mix of evangelical Christianity and Donald Trump-like political stances.

Front-running gubernatorial candidate U.S. Sen. Mike Braun has not addressed whether he would accept Beckwith as his running mate or put his own pick before the convention delegates.



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Beckwith said he hasn't spoken with Braun or the others seeking the Republican nomination about the lieutenant governor decision, which would likely come between Tuesday's primary and the May 16 filing deadline for candidates ahead of the June 15 state convention.

"I believe that delegates have the authority to nominate, not the governor," Beckwith said. "I believe in the delegate process. I want the delegates to choose the best candidates that they see fit, and I think that's going to be the best outcome for Hoosiers."

But Beckwith said he had no intention of stepping aside, joking he might do so if Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, a firebrand favorite of Trump's, moved to Indiana and ran for lieutenant governor.

"I've gotten a lot of people in the last few years that have really encouraged me to do this," Beckwith said. "But if there's somebody else I thought was better equipped, better suited for the job than I was, then I would get behind them, but I just don't see that in Indiana."

Braun stance on LG pick unclear

Beckwith's bid has received scant attention during the six-person race for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. Braun's campaign did not comment on the record this week when *State Affairs* asked about Beckwith's candidacy.

Top Braun adviser Josh Kelley said last year that "Braun is an outsider and comes from Main Street just like the hundreds of grassroots Hoosier conservatives that serve as convention delegates."

"Mike Braun believes our party and state are stronger when the grassroots has a seat at the table, and he looks forward to working with the delegates next summer to find a lieutenant governor candidate that shares his conservative values and can help further his agenda to make Indiana a beacon of freedom and opportunity," Kelley said in August.

Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, meanwhile, has said she would let the convention decide: "It is by a vote of the delegates that my potential running mate is selected."



Convention uncertainty

The delegates to recent Republican state conventions have shown themselves more than willing to reject the picks of party leadership.

That was demonstrated in the 2022 convention when delegates picked Diego Morales over Gov. Eric Holcomb appointee Holli Sullivan as the secretary of state candidate and Daniel Elliott defeated establishment favorite Elise Nieshalla for the state treasurer nomination.

But past Republican gubernatorial nominees David McIntosh, Mitch Daniels, Mike Pence and Eric Holcomb have had their running mate picks confirmed by delegates since 2000.

The last floor fight for the lieutenant governor spot was in 1996, when Indianapolis Mayor Stephen Goldsmith threw the decision outright to the convention, with delegates selecting Bluffton newspaper publisher George Witwer Jr. He had lost to Goldsmith in the primary but was strongly backed by social conservatives and anti-abortion activists.

That ticket ended up losing the general election to Frank O'Bannon and Joe Kernan, the last Democrats elected to the state's top positions.

Wells County Council member Brandon Harnish is running for a Republican delegate position from the northeastern Indiana county as a Beckwith supporter.

Harnish said Beckwith has built significant support around the state. "I'm voting for Micah," Harnish said. "I think he's the right man for

the job, and I'm going to vote for him on every ballot."

If Braun wins the nomination, he will face a difficult choice going into the convention, Harnish said. "Do you lock arms with the sort of grassroots, populist candidate in Micah Beckwith? Or do you risk embarrassment and put someone up against Micah?" Harnish said. "Now, if I were Mike Braun, if

I were on his team, I would say under no circumstances do you want to risk an embarrassment like that before you're even in office."

A smooth ride for Beckwith is not a certainty.

Sarah Redman, the Warrick County assessor and county Republican Party secretary, was annoyed when *State Affairs* told her Beckwith's campaign website listed her as a delegate candidate pledge to support him. Redman said as a local Republican leader she didn't get involved in contested party races.

Redman said that she believed delegates should have a say in picking the lieutenant governor candidate but that recruiting delegate candidates solely to win a nomination troubled her. "We see people that have never been involved in parties, or elections, and then all of a sudden they're coming out and they're taking the seats away from delegates," Redman said. "It's just — I have a mixed emotion about all of that."

Beckwith controversies contribute to support

Beckwith was in the middle of a controversy last year when he was a member of the Hamilton East Public Library Board in Fishers as it implemented a policy of reviewing teen section books for "age appropriateness" and moving some to adult sections. He resigned from the board in January, saying he wanted to concentrate on his lieutenant governor campaign.

Beckwith also gained attention in 2021 for saying he had given out hundreds of religious exemptions to people who didn't want to get COVID-19 vaccine shots.

That stance has helped him tap into conservative discontent with Holcomb's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the statewide mask mandate and business shutdowns ordered in the early months of the outbreak.

Beckwith said he disagreed with those who want to put the COVID-19 disputes in the past.

"No, we're not gonna move past COVID because that's how we forget about how we were grievously destroying our authority in the Constitution," he said. "That's the reason we don't forget Pearl Harbor or 9/11."

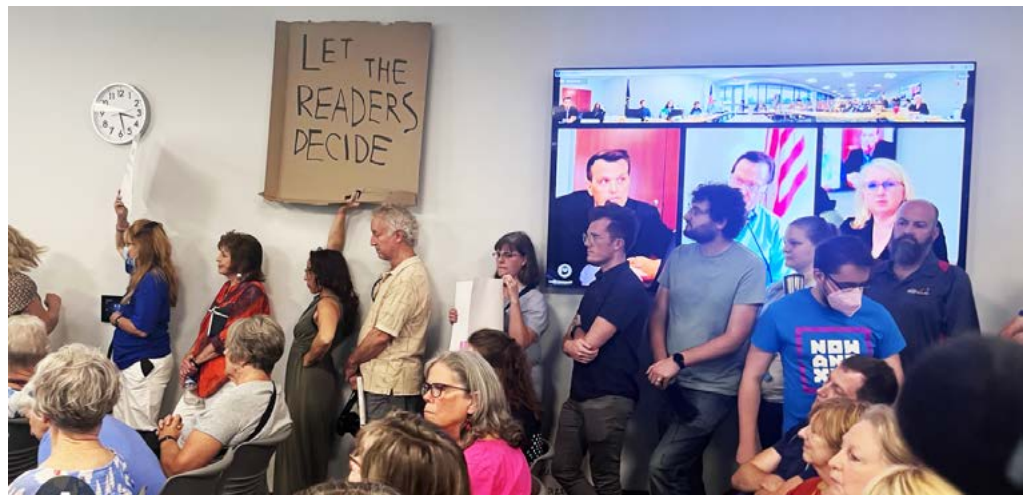
Harnish, the Wells County delegate candidate, said he regards Beckwith as "being vocal and being courageous."

"I think you do see that on issues like COVID lockdowns and the COVID mask mandates here in Indiana," Harnish said. "That's an issue that I've not forgotten about. No matter how much the governor may just want to move on from that. No matter how much other Republicans want to move on from it. I think Micah is willing to plant his flag on that and continue talking about it."

Harnish said he believed the attitude of delegates elected to the convention will be key for Beckwith: "If the Republican Party primary voters elect a bunch of Republican state delegates with a little bit of dog in them — some guys who aren't going to be persuaded on the floor to go along and get along — then Micah is going to win."

Senate Republican primary races

SD24: Brett Clark and Anne L. Engelhardt (open — Sen. Jon Crane is retiring). Clark



served as Hendricks County sheriff from 2015 to 2022. Engelhardt is a former Hendricks County Republican chairman and served on the Avon School Board for 15 years. Clark was instrumental in bringing crisis intervention training to Hendricks County and played a key role in the development of the new jail facility. During his

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time in office, he focused on fiscal responsibility, mental health and addiction, jail overcrowding and public safety issues. Clark held several positions with the Indiana Sheriffs' Association, including legislative chair and finally president in 2021.

Engelhardt has based her campaign on education. "Education is the cornerstone of any successful society," she said on her campaign website. "Statewide students' scores in both IREAD and ILEARN fell during COVID and are still flat. Locally, we are seeing gains in students' scores. Over half of the state budget is devoted to education, so we must rethink and create standards that will help students to rebound what is lost and excel."

She also supports local government control. "If we want thriving towns, cities, townships, libraries, and schools, then state government should empower through sensible legislation and allow citizens to control their local government. Our state government has the tendency to pass legislation that interferes with local government decisions, therefore limiting their ability to serve their citizens in the best possible way."

Clark began the cycle with \$31,193, raised \$52,090, spent \$15,649 and had an ending balance of \$67,634. Engelhardt has raised \$16,610, spent \$15,099 and had an ending balance of \$1,883. **Horse Race Status:** Toss-up

House primary races

HD90: Andrew Ireland, Tim McVey, David W. Waters and Elizabeth Williams (open — state Rep. Mike Speedy is running in CD6)

Ireland is a former deputy attorney general. He supports a plan that caps annual increases and promotes a phase-out of property taxes for seniors. On his campaign site, Ireland vows to sponsor universal school choice and "fight to put parents (not government bureaucrats) back in the driver's seat for choosing what education that their kids get."

Waters challenged Rep. Speedy in 2022, with the latter winning 82% of the vote. Waters wants to ban property taxes and backs "medical liberty" by opposing vaccine requirements.

McVey says he is running to focus on "quality education," according to his campaign site.

And Williams is the CEO/owner of Creative World Franklin Township and Expedient Health Services Solutions. Before owning and operating those businesses, she worked as a State Farm Insurance agent/owner. Williams also has military experience, serving in several areas of medical and logistics. She was "selected for her second command and took 134 Soldiers to combat operations in Iraq/Kuwait. Her meritorious service earned her the Bronze Star Medal," according

to her campaign site. Williams raised \$42,560, spent \$31,919 and had a cash balance of \$10,640. Ireland raised \$55,199, spent \$7,036 and had \$48,162 cash on hand. He loaned his campaign \$20,000 on April 18. McVey raised \$4,317, spent \$2,517 and had a cash balance of \$1,799. Waters raised \$1,451 and spent the same amount. **Horse Race Status:** Toss-up

HRCC spending on behalf of Borders, Engleman

House Speaker Todd Huston expressed confidence Tuesday that Republican House members will prevail over challengers in next week's primary. Nineteen of the 63 House Republicans seeking reelection this year are facing primary races.

Those challenges have been lower-key than two years ago when about two dozen candidates seized on COVID-19 discontent and other issues in a

largely unsuccessful attempt to oust incumbents and push the Republican-dominated Legislature further to the right.

The Indiana House Republican Campaign Committee (HRCC) and the state Republican Party have reported in the past week some \$350,000 in spending on behalf of House incumbents.

They have spent most heavily to help the campaign of Rep. Sharon Negele, who as deputy speaker pro tem is the highest-ranking woman in House leadership. Those entities have spent at least \$138,000 for Negele, including more than \$50,000 that's been reported so far this month.

Negele is seeking nomination for a seventh term



against Warren County Councilman Matt Commons, who has been endorsed by several officials across Benton, Montgomery and Warren counties in the rural House District 13 near Lafayette.

A contentious issue in that area has been the proposed water pipeline from the Wabash River aquifer to the LEAP Lebanon Innovation District. Commons calls it a “water-stealing pipeline.”

“Obviously in Sharon’s district there are local issues like carbon sequestration and water and wind and solar,” Huston told *State Affairs*. “We just wanted to make sure people knew Sharon’s record on those issues and Sharon’s support in our pockets. So just spending the money to make sure people are aware of all that she’s accomplished.”

Republicans have also spent at least \$85,000 this month alone to support Rep. Jim Lucas, who is being challenged by Brian Savilla, a high school teacher who served in the West Virginia Legislature before moving to Seymour in 2021.

Republicans are standing behind Lucas despite controversies that include pleading guilty to drunken driving charges last year, flashing his gun to some students at the Statehouse this year and being rebuked by House leadership in the past over racist social media posts.

“We support our caucus members that are in good standing,” Huston said. “Jim has been maybe never the easiest member. He’s always been a solid member for us, and we just have said we’re going to support all of our members, and that’s what we’re doing in Jim’s race and many others.”

That is in contrast to 2022 when the House Republican caucus spent more than \$1 million to boost primary challengers to then-Reps. Curt Nisly and John Jacob, whose hardline stances, such as repeatedly pushing a complete ban on abortion, had angered fellow Republicans. “They were not part of our caucus,” Huston said.

Other significant spending by state Republicans in House races this month has included about \$80,000 each for Reps. Bruce Borders and Karen Engleman.

Borders is facing a three-way race against former Rep. Jeff Ellington and Knox County Commissioner Kellie Streeter for the District 45 nomination. Huston said he believed Republicans had many good candidates in the seven districts where GOP incumbents didn’t seek reelection as the party looks to extend its supermajority mark of at least 67 House members for a seventh consecutive election cycle. “We look forward to continuing to tell that story about all the economic investments taking place literally across our state and all the good things are happening,” he said. “We’ll certainly be glad to be past Tuesday and the primary and really looking

forward to being able to compete in November.”

HD29: Baldwin endorses Shonkwiler

Alaina Shonkwiler has been endorsed by state Sen. Scott Baldwin. “As I fight for conservative principles at the Statehouse, it is important to have reliable conservative partners, and that’s why I am endorsing Alaina Shonkwiler as our next Representative for House District 29,” Baldwin said in a statement. “Alaina was raised in Noblesville, she’s a devoted military and police wife, and a loving mother. She has a wealth of experience in the public and private sectors, and is prepared to lead for Hamilton County on day one. Alaina is a consistent conservative through and through, and I know we will be well served by her leadership.”

HD51: Right to Life endorses Sharp

The Right to Life of Northeast Indiana PAC has endorsed Rhonda Sharp. “I am honored to announce that I am the only candidate for House District 51 to be endorsed by the Right to Life of Northeast Indiana PAC, and I could not be more humbled by this support,” Sharp said in a statement. “As a Christian, a wife, mother, and grandmother, life is precious at all stages for me, and as your next State Representative, I will always work to protect the lives of all Hoosiers. From fighting to preserve and protect our liberties and for lower taxes and an economy that works, to advocating for the resources families and expectant mothers need, you can count on me to always do what is right. I understand that complex issues require complex solutions, but standing for life is an easy choice and I will never waver on my convictions.”

Congress

CD5: Raju Chinthala demands apology

Raju Chinthala has issued a statement demanding a public apology from Fishers Councilman Brad DeReamer. Chinthala wants the apology following an encounter with DeReamer in which the councilman insinuated the congressional candidate was not welcome in the Republican Party and should become a Democrat. Chinthala has been an active member of the Hamilton County Republican Party for more than a decade and has served

Horse Race, from page 10

as the party's treasurer for several years. The encounter came soon after Chinthala was the only candidate not invited to participate in a candidate forum sponsored by the Liberty Belles.

Chinthala said in the statement: "It is my opinion, and the opinion of many supporters, that my Indian heritage and the color of my skin were the true reasons I was not welcomed to that event. ... It is dishonorable and disrespectful to suggest I leave the party that I faithfully serve."

Mayors endorse Chinthala

Former mayors Greg Ballard and Jim Brainard, along with former Commerce Secretary Jim Schellinger, have endorsed Chinthala. "We are writing to express our strong support for Raju Chinthala as the Republican nominee for Indiana's Fifth District Congressman," the trio said in a statement. "Over the years, we have had the privilege of working closely with Raju on various social and economic development projects, and have been consistently impressed by his leadership, talent, and wisdom. Raju has proven himself to be a trustworthy problem solver, always focused on addressing the real issues that impact our daily lives. As leaders ourselves, we recognize the value of his dedication and vision for our community."



CD6: Former senators back Shreve

Former state Sens. Beverly Gard and Patricia Miller have endorsed Jefferson Shreve. "Jefferson will be a strong advocate for rural Indiana and will work hard every day to deliver conservative results on behalf of Hoosiers," Gard said. Miller added, "Having known Jefferson for over a decade, I trust him to advance conservative solutions in Congress for Hoosiers."

Governor

Crouch on FSSA meeting

Six families of medically complex children representing Indiana Families United 4 Care met with Gov. Eric Holcomb and Daniel Rusyniak, secretary of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), on Monday.

Afterward, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch made the following statement:

"First, I appreciate that Gov. Holcomb and Sec. Rusyniak finally met with families who are being impacted by the transition from the state's Attendant Care Program to Structured Family Caregiving. This group submitted 10 recommendations to Sec. Rusyniak and the governor today. Careful consideration of these recommendations is the least Gov. Holcomb and FSSA can do at this point. There are 62 days to make necessary adjustments to help give some of these families not only the hope but the help they need. I sincerely hope that these families can get answers by this Friday on the recommendations submitted to FSSA. As I have said since January, I stand ready to help in any way possible. We in Indiana will be judged by how we care for the most vulnerable among us."

Doden ad features wife

The Doden campaign released a TV ad from Maci Doden about Eric Doden's "fearlessness," saying, "As governor, Eric will stand up for Indiana's foster kids, restore small towns and support our police."

Chambers at \$10 million

Brad Chambers has hit the \$10 million mark in self-funding his campaign for governor.

Chambers reached that level with a \$400,000 contribution his campaign reported April 26 to the Indiana Election Division as a loan. Gov. Eric Holcomb confirmed the same day he wouldn't endorse ahead of the May 7 primary any



of the six fellow Republicans aiming to take his place. Chambers has paid for the bulk of his bid for the Republican gubernatorial nomination since stepping down last summer as state commerce secretary.

State campaign finance reports showed Chambers had contributed \$8 million of the total \$12.8 million his campaign had raised through the end of March. He has since given the campaign \$500,000 infusions on April 8 and April 12, followed by a \$600,000 boost on April 19 ahead of last week's \$400,000.

Chambers has said from the start of his campaign he would invest heavily from his wealth as the founder of his real estate developer Buckingham Cos. for his campaign message that he's "a business guy" focused on growing the state's economy.

"That story resonates, but it's six and a half million people to communicate with," Chambers recently said of Indiana's voting-age population. "It takes time and it takes resources."

More family money for Doden campaign

Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden's campaign also saw \$2 million in additional contributions in April from his parents, Daryle and Brenda Doden. They had previously given \$4.7 million of Eric Doden's \$10 million in total contributions through the end of March.

The self-funding by Chambers and the Doden family still trails the \$11.6 million that Mike Braun sank into his successful 2018 U.S. Senate campaign.

Braun hasn't spent his own money on his gubernatorial campaign since formally entering the race in late 2022 and amassing \$10.2 million in fundraising as of March 31.

He has maintained a front-runner campaign, and a *State Affairs/Howey Politics Indiana* poll in early April found Braun with support from 44% of likely Republican primary voters.

Holcomb confirms no endorsement



Gov. Eric Holcomb again expressed dissatisfaction with the tenor of the Republican race when he spoke with reporters on Friday. "I put out a list of policy topics that I wanted to hear more of. That was not just coming from my perspective, but coming from Hoosiers all over the state that said, 'Where's the beef? Show us more, give us more substance,'" Holcomb said. "But, to date, I haven't heard much directly addressing those topics."

The two-term governor said he wouldn't publicly back any of the candidates. "We'll make an informed decision and vote and leave it to others to make up their own mind," Holcomb said. "They each offer something. In the eye of the beholder, they'll cast their vote."

Horse Race Status: Leans Braun

Colwell: All eyes on Haley Tuesday

BY JACK COLWELL



SOUTH BEND — Indiana’s presidential primary could draw some national attention, even though the results Tuesday will mean nothing in terms of selecting the nominees. There certainly won’t be national news of the magnitude of eight years ago, when Donald Trump ended the last chance of the “Stop Trump” movement, solidly defeating Ted Cruz and winning all 57 delegates at stake in the state’s Republican primary.



Now, there will only be a look at percentages in the Republican primary and analysis of what, if anything, it means for November if Nikki Haley gets a significant protest vote.

While both Trump and President Joe Biden long ago won more than enough delegates for nomination, their names will be on the Indiana ballot Tuesday — Biden unopposed in the Democratic primary; Trump listed along with Haley, who quit campaigning two months ago, on the Republican side.

Haley qualified for the Indiana ballot before she was clobbered by Trump in the March 5 Super Tuesday primaries and suspended her campaign.

Since Haley is out of the running, votes for her in Republican primaries are seen now as indication of unhappiness with Trump and a sign of possible defections from him in the fall.

The recent Pennsylvania Republican primary results were regarded as troubling news for Trump, with 155,000 voters — 16.5% of the GOP turnout — declining to vote for their presumptive nominee and instead picking Haley.

It seems unlikely that Haley will get a percentage that high in Indiana, where Trump has been so popular with Hoosier Republicans in his two presidential races.

Even if she did, it wouldn’t mean as much as that showing in Pennsylvania, a key state in determining the winner in the Electoral College. Republican defections there could be decisive. Indiana, however, is listed in all projections as in the Trump column for sure in the fall.

Signs of defections here would be viewed not in terms of suggesting some monumental upset in the fall in Indiana, but as an indication that Trump’s base might not be as solid nationally if slipping even in Indiana.

What if Haley’s total isn’t in double digits or barely gets there? That would bring analysis that Trump’s base remains solid.

No matter what happens in Indiana on Tuesday, any news nationally will be small potatoes, really just potato peels, in comparison with that 2016 presidential primary. Indiana Republican primary voters cinched it — Trump would be the nominee. Cruz

was in a “must win” situation to keep Trump from a first-ballot win at the Republican National Convention and keep alive the diminishing hopes of “Stop Trump” success in a brokered convention going into multiple ballots.

Cruz pulled out all the stops, even making a deal in which another contender, John Kasich, would stop campaigning in Indiana and let Cruz go more one-on-one against Trump. Cruz also got an endorsement from then-Gov. Mike Pence.

Polls showed Trump ahead, but not by a lot. Trump was not that confident of victory, complaining that the Indiana election system was “rigged” because he couldn’t control his Hoosier delegates on a second convention ballot.

Results: Cruz, needing a big win to stay viable, didn’t win a single delegate. Trump won so big all around the state that he claimed all 57 delegates. Cruz gave up. There was no way left to stop Trump. The nomination was decided.

And Pence, whose endorsement of Cruz had been tepid and not harmful to Trump, ended up for vice president on the ticket to appeal to evangelical voters.

In 2020, the traditional May primary was delayed until June 2 by the pandemic. Trump, then president, faced only token opposition from Bill Weld, a former Massachusetts governor. Trump got 91.9 percent of the Republican vote. If he comes close to a percentage like that on Tuesday, Trump will be buoyed, not troubled by the results. ♦

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



Horse Race: Pecker's Indiana connection

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — “A porn star, a Bible salesman and a guy named Pecker walk into a courtroom. ...”

That was a text I received last week from a source making an observation about Donald J. Trump’s Manhattan hush money trial involving actress Stormy Daniels and testimony from former *National Enquirer* publisher David Pecker. The text included an “LOL” salutation.

This trial is like pulling up a Trump World rock and watching the slimy creatures slither and wriggle out into the mainstream: porn stars, Playboy models, supermarket tabloid publishers, seedy “fixer” attorneys and a former U.S. president facing 88 criminal charges.

And it has already shed light on one of the most bizarre political episodes that played out in Indiana.

Our time machine takes us back to May 3, 2016, primary election day, when an incredulous U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz held an Evansville news conference to address allegations made on the cover of the *National Enquirer*: that his father, Rev. Rafael Cruz, was a co-conspirator with Lee Harvey Oswald in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The supermarket tabloid had published a supposed photo showing Rev. Cruz with Oswald, handing out pro-Fidel Castro pamphlets in New Orleans in 1963, not long before Kennedy was killed in Dallas.

We learned from last week’s testimony from Pecker that, in his view, “the cover is the only thing that matters.” While the *National Enquirer* typically sold a couple hundred thousand copies a week, millions of voters would scan its covers while waiting in supermarket checkout lines.

Trump repeatedly referenced the story leading up to the 2016 Indiana primary. “I mean, what was he doing — what was he doing with Lee Harvey Oswald shortly before the death?” Trump told Fox News. “Before the shooting? It’s horrible.”

At an Evansville news conference the day of the primary election, Cruz issued a stunning rebuke. “This morning, Donald Trump went on national television and attacked my father. Donald Trump alleges that my dad was involved in assassinating JFK,” Cruz said in the most surreal political twist in Indiana history. “Now, let’s be clear, this is nuts. This is not a reasonable position. This is just kooky. And while I’m at it, I guess I should go ahead and admit, yes, my dad killed JFK, he is secretly Elvis and Jimmy Hoffa is buried in his backyard.”



Cruz then launched into a broadside against Trump, saying, “I’m gonna tell you what I really think of Donald Trump: This man is a pathological liar. He doesn’t know the difference between truth and lies. He lies practically every word that comes out of his mouth, and in a pattern that I think is straight out of a psychology textbook, his response is to accuse everybody else of lying.”

Two months earlier, Trump had vowed to “spill the beans” on Sen. Cruz’s wife, Heidi, over some risqué photos. “I don’t get angry often, but you mess with my wife, you mess with my kids, that’ll do it every time,” Cruz told reporters in Wisconsin. “Donald, you’re a sniveling coward, and leave Heidi the hell alone.”

Ted and Rafael Cruz had been barnstorming across Indiana leading up to the state’s Republican presidential primary, which Trump would win 53%-37%, essentially clinching his first GOP nomination.

After the results became clear, Cruz dropped out of the race at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Indianapolis, never mentioning

Trump, exposing the distinct contours of the fissures spidering throughout the Grand Old Party that would eventually fall away that fateful year.

Sen. Cruz had been campaigning with Gov. Mike Pence, who had issued one of the squishiest endorsements in history. “I’m not against anybody, but I will be voting for Ted Cruz in the upcoming Republican primary,” Pence said. “I urge everyone to make up their own mind.”

Rev. Rafael Cruz had been campaigning in the state with Curt Smith of the Indiana Family Institute. That Trump would win 50% of evangelical Hoosier Republicans underscored Pence's political vulnerability heading into his reelection campaign and why he took Trump's off-again/on-again veep nomination that following July as a political lifeline.

Or, as Howey Politics Indiana observed in the May 5, 2016, edition: "That Pence finally emerged in the Cruz corner at the 11th hour came after the family groups had spent weeks fomenting angst over a Trump nomination. That so many evangelicals sided with Trump is a political problem for Pence."

That would have been the case had Pence remained on the Indiana ballot seeking reelection. As the vice presidential nominee, he became the Trump campaign's evangelical emissary.

Now we get confirmation on what many already suspected from Trump's Manhattan trial this past week: *The National Enquirer's* Cruz/JFK assassination story was a hoax. It was a total fabrication. It was "fake news" and "alternative facts" before those terms became vogue in the months ahead.

"We mashed the photos and the different picture with Lee Harvey Oswald. And mashed the two together," Pecker said on the witness stand. "And that's how that story was prepared — created, I would say."

According to NBC News, when Prosecutor Joshua Steinglass asked whether Ted Cruz was gaining popularity in the presidential race around the time of the negative headlines, Pecker said, "I believe so."

What happened in the following four months of that fateful 2016 will be the stuff of psychological studies of human behavior in the coming ages. Trump selected Pence as his running mate as a bridge to ensure evangelical support. That began a consolidation of Indiana GOP establishment-backing for Trump. When the party had released its Republican National Convention delegate slate after the primary, only two — Rex Early and Sullivan County Chairman Bill Springer — were in the Trump camp. With Pence's ascension, the Indiana establishment fell in line.

Then, in September, after his July Republican National Convention speech in Cleveland, where he had refused to band with Trump and roiling delegates on the floor, Cruz released this statement to *The Texas Tribune*: "After many months of careful consideration, of prayer and searching my own conscience, I

have decided that on Election Day, I will vote for the Republican nominee, Donald Trump."

In July, Trump had said he wasn't interested in Cruz's support. "I don't want his endorsement," Trump said. "If he gives it, I will not accept it." But months later, he did.

The Texas Tribune called Cruz's Trump endorsement "an astonishing reversal" and the first of hundreds that would follow.

Pence's inclusion on the ticket was fateful. He coaxed evangelical Republicans to "come home," despite the October 2016 "Access Hollywood" tape revelation that showed Trump explaining how he could grab women "by the pussy." That set the stage for the greatest upset in American political history when Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton.

It was during this time frame that Michael Cohen, Trump's fixer attorney, along with Pecker, apparently conspired to pay off Stormy Daniels and Playboy model Karen McDougal in a series of alleged catch-and-kill stories of the women's sexual affairs with the candidate, as well as planting *National Enquirer* stories during the election homestretch.

The prism of time adds fascinating relief to this story. After losing their 2020 reelection, Vice President Pence refused to bend to President Trump's demands that he participate in a coup d'état that would have had Pence refusing to certify Electoral College votes, resulting in the U.S. Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021.

Today, the Indiana GOP establishment is split on Trump — with Pence, Sen. Todd Young and Gov. Eric Holcomb either opposing or noncommittal, while U.S. Rep. Jim Banks, Secretary of State Diego Morales, Attorney General Todd Rokita and the primary gubernatorial candidates are endorsing the former president.

This past January, after Trump won the Iowa caucus, one of the first Republicans to endorse a third Trump nomination was Sen. Cruz. ❖

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

DeBoer: Why my tax bill went up

BY LARRY DeBOER

WEST LAFAYETTE — It was printed in bold letters on the front of the envelope. “Open Immediately. Property Tax Notice Enclosed.” It was the annual property tax bill on my house! I remembered last year: a jump in my tax bill of 31%.

I tore open the envelope and found the page of numbers showing how my tax bill was calculated. The taxable assessed value of my home went up only 3% this year. Last year the increase was 35%. My tax rate went down by almost 5%. The tax bill is the assessed value times the rate. If my home value went up 3% but my tax rate went down 5%, my tax bill should decrease by about 2%, right?

Wrong. My tax bill went up 10%.

That scenario is pretty typical for Indiana homeowners this year. Statewide, taxable homestead assessed values rose 3.8%, the average tax rate fell by half a percent, yet the average tax bill rose 6.6%. That’s much less than last year’s 17% tax bill increase. Still, how does the tax bill rise more than assessed value when the tax rate goes down?

We can all answer this question for our own homes. Indiana provides a page of numbers with every tax bill showing how it’s calculated. You get the page even if your mortgage holder pays your taxes from escrow. Let’s take a look.

At the top of the page is the gross assessed value. That’s the assessor’s estimate of the possible selling price of my house. It rose 11% this year, close to the statewide average increase of 10.1%. Home values have been rising everywhere, and our market-value-in-use assessment system is capturing the increase.

Gross assessed value minus deductions is net assessed value, which is taxable. The General Assembly increased deductions for this year to provide some tax relief. The \$48,000 standard homestead deduction changed a little. The supplemental homestead deduction changed a lot. It was increased from 35% of the assessment after the standard deduction, to 40%. That’s why net assessments rose so much less than gross assessments.

The tax rate is a combination of the rates of the county, city, school district and the smaller units. Tax rates are recalculated each year by dividing the local unit’s tax levy by the total net assessed value within the government’s boundaries. Statewide, the levy rose 5.9% and the total net assessed value rose 6.4%, so the average tax rate fell 0.5%.

This year the General Assembly restricted levy growth by cutting the growth of the maximum levy from 5% to 4% and restricting growth of school referendum levies for operating costs to 3%. Last year the average levy increased 8.8%, an unusually large rise. The new restrictions helped limit that increase to 5.9% this year.

About two-thirds of the counties have local income taxes that provide property tax credits to homeowners. Some counties increased their local income tax credits this year, which caused homestead tax bills to drop. My county left the credit about the same.

That’s the end of the tax bill calculation for homeowners where tax rates are lower. Those homeowners probably saw modest increases or even decreases in their tax bills this year.

However, if the tax rate you pay is high enough, you’ll be eligible for a circuit breaker tax cap credit. The Indiana Constitution limits homeowner tax bills to 1% of the gross assessed value of the home, before deductions. The taxpayer gets a credit if the tax bill exceeds the cap.

My house is eligible for a tax cap credit. It dropped by 84%. Homestead tax cap credits fell 61% statewide. My tax bill went up, not down, because of the drop in tax cap credits.

The constitutional tax caps are based on gross assessed value. Tax bills are based on net assessed value. Deductions increased, so net assessed value grew much less than gross assessed value. That means the cap rose faster than the tax bill, so the credit needed to bring the tax bill down to the cap was much smaller.

The General Assembly gave homeowners a tax break, but for some, the Indiana Constitution took it back. ❖

DeBoer is a professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

Dunn: Honey, guess what I did?



BY CRAIG DUNN

CARMEL — I can just imagine that moment when the parsimonious Mrs. Jill Dunn opens the local newspaper and reads, “Candidate Craig Dunn spends \$8 million of his own money on primary campaign for (fill in the blank).”

It wouldn't really matter whether the primary election was for governor, senator, United States representative, mayor or dogcatcher, I would be toast. It wouldn't be a pretty sight. No, my wife is thrifty and hates to waste money. I'm more apt to be dragged along on a shopping trip looking for a \$21 cheaper purse or bargain pair of shoes than I am to have to worry about my lovely wife wasting a single dollar. On the other hand, I am more of a creature of convenience who values time over money. I'll buy the first thing I like if it will save me from an extra hour shopping in a crowded mall, even if I have to spend much more.

That's why I got a chuckle when I read the recent campaign finance reports for the Indiana governor Republican primary election. Hey, Honey! I almost forgot to tell you. I saved \$3 filling up my gas tank this morning, and Kroger had milk on sale for 50 cents off. I also got a free Mocha Lachachino with skim South American oat milk by using my points at Starbucks. And, oh, I spent \$8 million on my Indiana governor's race. Even the creative minds behind the television series “Game of Thrones” could not imagine the painful termination of life that I would experience at the hands of Mrs. Dunn.

Candidates trying to buy an election using self-funding is nothing new. We've seen it in one form or another for many decades. However, the 2024 primaries in Indiana may just take the cake. In the Indiana Republican U.S. Senate primary, Seymour, Indiana egg baron John Rust spent nearly \$1.5 million of his own money for the joy of learning the Indiana election code.

If he had not received a massive beatdown by the judicial system and had gained access to the ballot, who knows how many eggs sold it would have taken to satisfy his lust for office. Alas, the egg man was clucked!

Indiana's 5th Congressional District Republican campaign has seen State Rep. Chuck Goodrich spend \$2.6 million of his own funds chasing an open seat, only for U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz to flip-flop and decide she was not yet willing to leave the hallowed halls of Congress.

Ouch!

I'm pretty sure Goodrich will spend another mill or two before this race is over. The race has gone ugly, and it takes beaucoup dollars to engage in a multimedia catfight. The 6th Congressional District would almost seem like a casual affair if former Indianapolis Republican mayoral candidate Jefferson Shreve would not have had a few million dollars left over after his miserable Indianapolis campaign. He spent a whopping \$13.5 million of his own money on that campaign and still got thrashed beyond recognition.

Undeterred, he has now injected \$4.5 million into the 6th District race. Coming up a piker, state Rep. Mike Speedy has forked over a mere \$1.3 million of his own funds for his campaign. It looks like whatever the outcome of the primary, the Shreve and Speedy families will still be able to afford Christmas this year. And then we have the granddaddy of all spend fests, the Indiana governor's primary. Maybe it's because the salary of the Indiana governor is set to be raised to \$198,513 in 2025, that so many people want to spend so much of their own money to get elected.

Why, if candidate Brad Chambers served 40 years as governor, he could earn back all the \$8 million that he has either donated or loaned his campaign. Candidate Eric Doden has been much smarter or luckier to practice the philosophy of OPM (other people's money). Only in Doden's case it's been MAD (mom and dad's) money. Mom and Dad Doden just popped for another \$2 million in contributions to their son's campaign.

Candidate Mike Braun made a big personal investment in his political future when he contributed mightily to his U.S. Senate campaign, loaning it \$5.5 million. That money enabled Braun to convince Hoosiers that he was just a good old boy and not one of those fat-cat slick politicians like Todd Rokita and Luke Messer.

Braun won his Senate primary handily and, six years later, joined the spend fest that has become the Indiana gubernatorial race. This time, Braun's position as senator has helped him leverage his campaign finances and attract millions of dollars from out of state investors/contributors who just love to see the Hoosier State led by just another common man.

God bless Suzanne Crouch! She has gone about campaign finance the old-fashioned way, raising funds through hard work and individual donations. While she has not been

able to stroke her own campaign a cool million or two, she has done a miraculous job of raising money and now finds herself with the most money, \$3 million, on hand going into the final days of the gubernatorial primary. Some might read this and think that I am against self-funding political campaigns.

To the contrary, my view is that if you have the money and want to spend it on political office, have at it.

In some cases, such as challenging an incumbent officeholder, self-funding may be the only hope of prying an entrenched politician out of office.

My only problem with self-funders is with those who do not “donate” their own funds to their campaign, but rather “loan” the campaign money. Here is how that “loan” works. Candidate A “donates” his campaign \$2 million and loses. He is out the money with no way of recouping his personal funds. Candidate A “loans” his campaign \$2 million and loses. He may be out the money unless supporters pay off the loan (not likely).

Candidate A “donates” his campaign \$2 million and wins. He wins, but he is out \$2 million that he can’t recover. Candidate A “loans” his campaign \$2 million and wins. He then can conduct fundraisers from a position of holding office and contributors post-election can and will contribute to him getting his money back.

You can clearly see how contributors wanting to curry favor with the newly elected officeholder might see giving at this point as getting more bang for the buck. The law says you can’t give money to an elected official in an attempt to derive a benefit. The law allows you to contribute to the campaign of a candidate after an election where the money goes directly back to the elected official in the form of repayment of campaign debt.

Call me old-fashioned, but this just has a hint of the odor of a Hoosier barn lot.

There’s no doubt about it. This is going to be one massively expensive bunch of Republican primaries in Indiana. Let’s just hope and pray that the right Hoosiers get their money’s worth. ❖

Dunn is the former Howard County Republican chairman.



Marcus: Diversity in our congressional districts

BY MORTON J. MARCUS

INDIANAPOLIS — On or before May 7, Hoosiers will vote for congressional candidates appearing on the November ballots. Those selected will represent our nine districts until the first week of 2027. What do they know of us? In fact, what do we know of us?

For example, the total population of Indiana grew by 4.5% between 2012 and 2022. From Congressional District 2 (South Bend and Elkhart) in the north central part of the state to as far south and east as CD 6 (Columbus and Richmond), population growth exceeded 5%.

In CD 1 (Northwest Indiana) and most of Southern Indiana (CDs 8 and 9) growth was in the 4% range. However, in CD 7 (the northern two-thirds of Marion County) population growth was only 1.6%. Differences in population growth often mean serious challenges for housing and local businesses.

That data masks other population differences. Five of our nine CDs lost population under the age of 18. CD 7 lost 6.9% of its young people, while neighboring CD 6 (Winchester to Columbus) gained 7.7% in that age group. But school buildings aren’t built to be

moved. At the other end of the age distribution, the population 65 and older grew by 30%, led at 38% by CD 5 (Kokomo and Marion south to the trendy trio of Carmel, Fishers and Westfield). CD 6, by contrast, had but 16% growth in that age group.

The state’s Hispanic population grew by 125,600, or 31%, with less than 40% of that growth represented by Mexicans, 20% Puerto Ricans and Cubans, and the balance from other Hispanic or Latino areas. In percentage terms, CD 3 (Portland to Fort Wayne and LaGrange) had the lowest increase at 21%, while CD 6 more than doubled its Hispanic population (up 144%).

The Hispanic population includes people of all racial groupings. When they are removed and only non-Hispanic people are considered, we see a 97,000 decline in the white-alone Hoosier population. That number terrifies white nationalists. What they miss is that this so-called loss was offset by the 169,000 people reporting they were of some other race alone or of two or more races.

CDs 6 and 7 had declines in the white-alone classification of 57,000 and 61,000, respectively, not offset by increases in the more diverse groups mentioned above. CDs 1, 2 and 4 did have such offsets; the remaining CDs 3,5,8 and 9 all had increases in

the white-alone group but with equal or greater increases in the more diverse groups.

That’s what’s happening. More people are reporting a wider range of racial ancestry than previously. As genealogy becomes more fashionable, occupying a prominent time slot on public TV,

more people are aware of and ready to identify the complexity of our origins. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist. Reach him at mortonjmarcus@gmail.com. Follow him and John Guy on “Who Gets What?”

Sabato: Where Biden's primary showing was strong, weak

BY J. MILES COLEMAN



CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Last week, we considered Donald Trump’s performance in the Republican primary. Of course, Trump ended up dominating what was initially a crowded field and has been the presumptive nominee for more than a month. But when we went into the weeds in each state and looked at where his 2024 coalition was especially strong (or weak), some familiar patterns were present. Generally speaking, while Trump’s hold on rural America remains strong, there are clearly some signs that he’s continuing to struggle in many suburban counties.

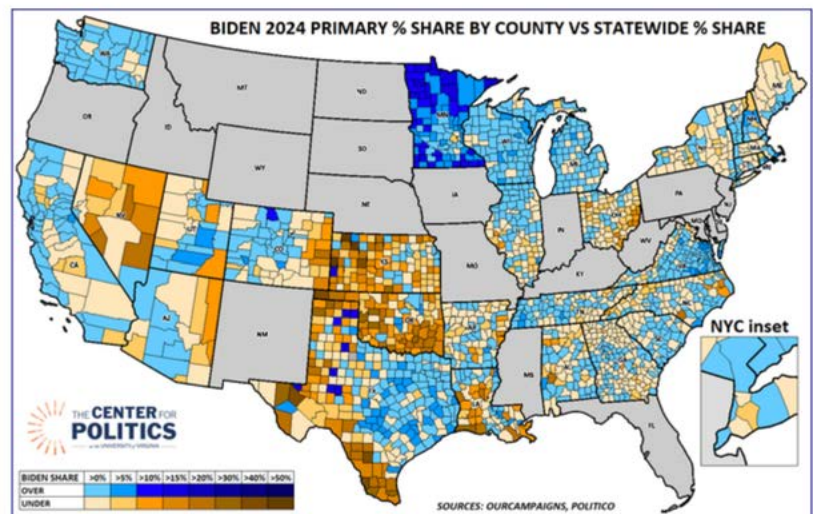
So, for this week, we are doing something of a follow-up article and shifting our focus to the Democratic side. If the Republican primary was a lopsided affair this cycle, the Democratic primary has been even more of a cut-and-dry event: except for American Samoa’s caucus—where entrepreneur Jason Palmer, a former student of the Center’s Director, Larry Sabato, pulled an upset—President Biden has handily won each contest this year. That said, there has been a considerable amount of media interest in the “protest” vote against Biden, specifically over his foreign policy, in the context of several state contests, notably Michigan and Minnesota (we’ll get to those later).

In our analysis of the Republican primary, we treated the contest as if it were a two-way race between Trump and his strongest (and we are being somewhat charitable with that descriptor) rival, former Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley. This was because Haley was Trump’s sole active competitor for much of the time that the primary was live, and a two-way format just made for easier comparisons across the board. Biden, though, lacked a Haley-caliber challenger. In most primaries, his two most visible challengers, Rep. Dean Phillips (D, MN-3) and self-help author Marianne Williamson, would claim a few percentage points each. In some other primaries, “uncommitted” would be the sole option aside from Biden. In New York, where voters lacked an “uncommitted” option, there was an effort by some Democrats to just leave their ballot blank as a form of protest—but as undervotes weren’t

accounted for by our state source, we couldn’t consider them here.

So, with that in mind, for our analysis this week, we are looking at the Biden vs “Not Biden” vote, with the latter category encompassing all votes cast for someone other than Biden.

With that background, Map 1 considers how Biden performed in each county



compared to his overall share in each state. In blue counties, Biden’s share was higher than his overall statewide share while the reverse was the case in orange counties. Map 1 excludes states that have held caucuses and includes every primary state where Biden faced at least some opposition except for Penn-

sylvania, which voted on Tuesday and is still processing votes (although we'll have some brief comments and maps specifically for the Keystone State later on).

Before we get into our more specific observations, we would note again, thinking bigger picture, that the Democratic primary was hardly competitive. Biden's vote share exceeded 90% in about one-third of the nearly 2,000 counties/equivalents that Map 1 considers—his share was at or above 85% in 60% of the counties. So Biden's high starting point means that, in most counties where he did especially well, he just didn't have that much room to beat his overall number in most states. This is one reason why there is so much more dark orange than dark blue on the map.

The one big exception to this rule, though, was Minnesota. Statewide, "Uncommitted" received almost 19% of the vote, and its support was concentrated in the core Twin Cities metro counties — in Hennepin County, for instance, it took 25% countywide and 37% in Minneapolis proper. With a few counties effectively weighing down his statewide share, Biden was above his overall number in 83 of Minnesota's 87 counties; he also ran at least 10 percentage points over his statewide share in 36 counties.

Some of the darkest blue counties in Minnesota were concentrated in the rural northwest — though she dropped out before her home state's primary in 2020, Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D) also had some notable strength there. In fact, Klobuchar's best county from 2020, Red Lake, was also Biden's best county, in relative terms, nationally on Map 1. We'd also note that this doesn't mean we expect Biden to actually carry these types of areas in the general election — Red Lake County was two-to-one for Trump in 2020, and Klobuchar could well lose it for the first time in her career later this year —but it does illustrate that the "urban" protest vote made these rural areas appear relatively more pro-Biden in the context of the primary.

Though it was something of an extreme case, Minnesota's fundamental dynamic was at play throughout the Upper Midwest. In Michigan, which had a more publicized, if ultimately less impactful, Uncommitted effort than Minnesota, Biden showed some relative weakness in urban areas. Some notable counties where Biden was under his state share were Wayne (Detroit and Dearborn), Washtenaw (Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan), Ingham (Lansing and Michigan State University), and Kent (Grand Rapids). Biden ran more than 5 percentage points above his overall share in a few rural counties in northern Michigan, and also overperformed in some large suburban counties, notably Oakland in suburban Detroit and Ottawa directly west of Grand Rapids.

In Wisconsin, Biden was similarly under his overall share in the state's most Democratic counties, Dane (Madison and the University of Wisconsin) and Milwaukee. Interestingly enough, a few counties in the northwest, which share a media market with the Twin Cities, were also orange on the map.

With states like Minnesota and Michigan in mind, it does seem that Biden's relative weakness in some big city/campus areas does dovetail with some polling showing him with softness among some key Democratic constituencies (namely, young people and nonwhite voters).

Looking at the primary returns in their entirety, an open vs. closed primary contrast seemed to materialize. Though there were some exceptions, states where the pro-

Biden coalition was most "rural" tended to have open primaries while the pro-Biden vote was more "urban" in closed primary states.

This rule holds true for the three Upper Midwest states that we mentioned earlier — Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin all have open primaries. We would also point to our state, Virginia. Though Biden showed some weakness along the Appalachian Blue Ridge mountains, most of Northern Virginia's large localities are orange.

Just to our southwest, in Tennessee, which is also open, Biden was under his statewide share in three of the state's four most populous counties. The sole exception, Memphis's Shelby County, has the largest Black population, a group that has been perhaps Biden's most loyal bloc in the primary.

Closed primary states where Biden was especially weak in rural areas included Louisiana and Oklahoma. Both states are overwhelmingly Republican in general elections, but the former is still plurality-Democratic by registration, and Republicans only claimed a registration advantage in the latter less than a decade ago. So both states retain noticeable "ancestrally Democratic" blocs — these voters have no intention of backing Biden in the fall, and as registered Democrats, voted against him in the primary. ❖

Rokita addresses pronouns at work

INDIANAPOLIS — Attorney General Todd Rokita's office on Wednesday issued an official opinion arguing an employer is "likely not liable" if one of its employees does not use a co-worker's preferred pronouns — as long as "a reasonable person would not find the work environment to be objectively hostile" (Meeks, [State Affairs](#)). According to the office, neither state nor federal law requires an employee to use a co-worker's preferred pronouns.

"No federal court has found occasional misuse of pronouns alone, even if intentional, to be actionable discrimination or create a hostile work environment under Title VII," the office said in the opinion. It did, however, acknowledge that "repeated, continuous, intentional misuse" could create a hostile work environment.

The opinion came in response to a formal inquiry made by Rep. Mike Speedy, R-Indianapolis, who asked if a co-worker must refer to a "gender nonconforming coworker by their preferred pronouns and new name" and if an employer would be liable if one of its employees refused to do so. In 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Bostock v. Clayton County* held that "an employer who fires an individual merely for being gay or transgender violates Title VII." Rokita's office contended in the opinion that "Bostock's holding was limited solely to the question of whether an employer may fire an employee based on the employee's sexual orientation or transgender status; it did not address the legality of related conduct."

During a Wednesday news conference, Rokita claimed the opinion was needed because of "the transanity that is dominating so many facets of our society." Rokita said the issue is affecting small businesses that worry they will be held liable if their employees don't

use another's preferred pronouns or name. Speedy, who joined Rokita at the news conference, said he brought forward the inquiry "to protect businesses from government overreach, from cancel culture, from the wokeism that we are experiencing."

Biden to change cannabis scheduling

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration plans to remove marijuana from a list of the most dangerous and highly regulated drugs, the Department of Justice said Tuesday night ([Capital Chronicle](#)). The Drug Enforcement Administration will propose moving the drug from a Schedule I substance, which also includes heroin and methamphetamine, to Schedule III, which is the category for regulated-but-legal drugs including testosterone and Tylenol with codeine. Indiana lawmakers have resisted legalizing marijuana partly due to the federal classification.

Indiana invests in Israeli bonds

INDIANAPOLIS — State Treasurer Daniel Elliott announced Wednesday he's investing more state dollars in Israeli bonds ([Indiana Public Media](#)). The new \$5 million investment follows a \$35 million purchase Elliott made last November. That brings the state's total investment in the state of Israel up to \$110 million. Critics of the move last year said it amounted to support of the genocide of Palestinians. Those cries have only grown louder in recent months. And protests on college campuses across the country in recent days — including, notably, at Indiana University — have called on universities to divest from Israel.

IU has graduation, protest plans

BLOOMINGTON — As graduation weekend

approaches, and protests continue on campuses around the country, Indiana University is putting plans in place to keep students, staff and families safe ([WRTV](#)). In a release on Wednesday, IU announced they will have a designated area for protesting outside of the venues for this weekend's ceremonies. Meanwhile, the school says there will be designated staff inside the venues to stop all disruptions.

United Methodists repeal LGBTQ ban

CHARLOTTE — United Methodist delegates repealed their church's longstanding ban on LGBTQ clergy with no debate on Wednesday, removing a rule forbidding "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" from being ordained or appointed as ministers. Delegates voted 692-51 at their General Conference — the first such legislative gathering in five years. That overwhelming margin contrasts sharply with the decades of controversy around the issue. Past General Conferences of the United Methodist Church had steadily reinforced the ban and related penalties amid debate and protests, but many of the conservatives who had previously upheld the ban have left the denomination in recent years, and this General Conference has moved in a solidly progressive direction.

Melton cites Gary homicide decrease

GARY — Four months into his first term, Mayor Eddie Melton was bullish on his city's future during his first State of the City address (Dalton, [NWI Times](#)). "We know our city is behind, and we suffer from decades of limited resources," the mayor told a crowd of hundreds gathered in the West Side Leadership Academy's auditorium on Tuesday, "but every day we are building on a plan to make Gary this nation's greatest comeback story."