

The woman behind Title IX's power play

Marvella Bayh's fight for equality paved the way for Indiana Fever star Caitlin Clark

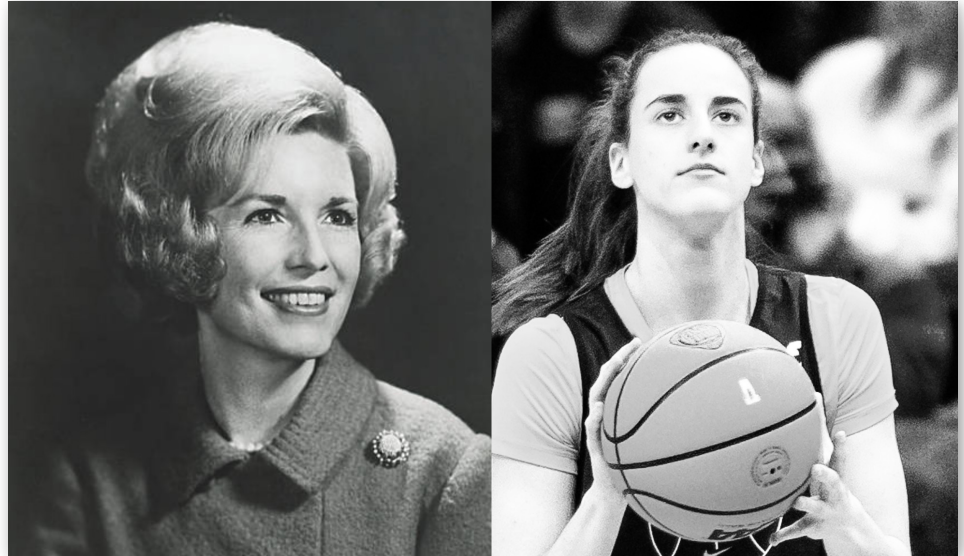
BY BRIAN A. HOWEY



When you ponder the explosive rise of Indiana Fever point guard [Caitlin Clark](#) at this weekend's WNBA All-Star game

at Gainbridge Fieldhouse, remember that it may not have happened without [Marvella Belle Hern Bayh](#).

Marvella Hern had been elected governor at her native Oklahoma Girls State and then president of Girls Nation in the



Marvella Bayh and Caitlin Clark. (Credits: Courtesy of The Elkhart Truth; Erik Drost)

1950s. Motivated by the legacy of founder Thomas Jefferson, she had applied for admission to the University of Virginia, only to be told that "women need not apply."

CONTINUED ON PG. 3

The whims of change on tariffs

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY

INDIANAPOLIS — We've all heard the phrase "winds of change" used as a metaphor for powerful forces driving transformative change. With President Donald J. Trump and his tariffs, it's more like the "whims of change."

CONTINUED ON PG. 2

Quote of the Week

"We still don't know totally what it's going to do, but we know it isn't for us. We know we're going to have cuts. We're going to have cuts in Medicaid. We're going to have cuts in services."

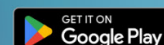


Rep. Greg Porter,

D-Indianapolis, on the impact of President Donald Trump's Big Beautiful Bill on Indiana.



Faster news
One app. No hassle. Just news.



HOWEY POLITICS INDIANA

Alison Bethel

Chief Content Officer & Editor-in-Chief

Brian A. Howey

Senior Writer & Columnist

bhowey2@gmail.com

Tom Davies

Indiana Managing Editor

Jarred Meeks

Statehouse Reporter

Kirsten Adair

Statehouse Reporter

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire

sales@stateaffairs.com

Contact HPI

Email: bhowey2@gmail.com

Howey's cell: 317.506.0883

Business Office: 786.363.9990

Tips: tips@stateaffairs.com

© 2025, Howey Politics Indiana.

Jack E. Howey

Editor Emeritus | 1926-2019



A container ship at a port. (Credit: VichienPetchmai via Getty Images)

Trump announced big tariff increases in Indiana's largest export markets last week, including 35% on the state's No. 1 partner, Canada (up from 25% in April), and 30% on Mexico (up from 25%). Indiana's fourth-largest export market is China, which now has a 55% tariff.

It's part of a kaleidoscope of moving tariff targets based on the judgment of basically one man: Trump.

Before the president announced his "Liberation Day" tariffs in April, commodity analyst Brian Basting with Advance Trading told [Hoosier Ag Today's](#) C.J. Miller, "It could be volatile. ... Anytime you're talking about the volume of trade — particularly in agriculture that's involved with some of these key partners, whether it be Mexico, Canada, or China — it all adds up. The market is heading into these deadlines as such with a bearish stance, so maybe some of it's baked into the market. We don't know at this point, but it definitely is another ingredient and the recipe for price volatility."

According to the [Office of the United States Trade Representative](#), Indiana's largest export market was Canada, which received \$13.9 billion in goods in 2024, representing 23% of

the state's total goods exports. Canada was followed by Mexico (\$7.5 billion), Italy (\$6.5 billion), China (\$5.1 billion) and Germany (\$4.2 billion).

The Hoosier export figure to Canada is shocking because it has declined from \$14.9 billion in 2022. Trade with China dropped to \$5 billion from \$5.1 billion over the same period.

In 2022, Indiana exported \$2.6 billion in soybeans, \$1.3 billion in corn, \$836 million in feeds and other feed grains, \$472 million in soybean meal and \$394 million in pork. In 2023, according to the U.S. Trade Representative, Indiana exported \$2.2 billion in soybeans and \$946 million in corn. Feed grain exports declined to \$713 million, or by \$123 million, over the same period.

Indiana did export \$446 million in pork, an increase of \$52 million.

Indiana was the eighth-largest state exporter of goods in 2024 with \$59.9 billion, an increase of 68% (\$24 billion) from its 2014 export level. Goods exports accounted for 12% of Indiana's gross domestic product in 2024. Indiana goods exports in 2022 supported an estimated 176,000 jobs. A

total of 8,407 companies exported from Indiana locations in 2023. Of those, 7,044 (84%) were small and medium-sized enterprises with fewer than 500 employees. Small and medium-sized firms generated 13.4% of Indiana's total exports of goods in 2023.

According to [Autos Drive America](#), Indiana produced 948,130 vehicles in 2023, generating 124,135 jobs (and another 97,813 in indirect employment) while making \$9.4 billion in employee compensation. It's a \$19 billion industry, producing 3.8% of Indiana's gross state product, but subject to volatility because many car components assembled in Indiana are made with parts from Mexico and Canada.

On [social media](#) Monday morning, Trump observed that the United States "has been ripped off on TRADE (and MILITARY!), by friend and foe, alike, for DECADES. It has come at a cost of TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS, and it is just not sustainable any longer - And never was!"

According to [The Budget Lab at Yale](#), U.S. tariff rates have skyrocketed to 16.6% from 2.5% on Jan. 19, the day before Trump returned to the Oval Office. If his latest tariffs remain on his new and improved Aug. 1 deadline (subject to change, of course), the average tariff would be 20.6%, the highest since 1910. These tariffs make the infamous Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which poured fuel on the Great Depression, look benign.

During Trump's first term, tariffs rose to 2.5% from 1.5%, according to The Budget Lab. "What happened in his first term is not nearly in the ballpark of what is happening now," Ernie Tedeschi, the lab's director of economics, told [The New](#)

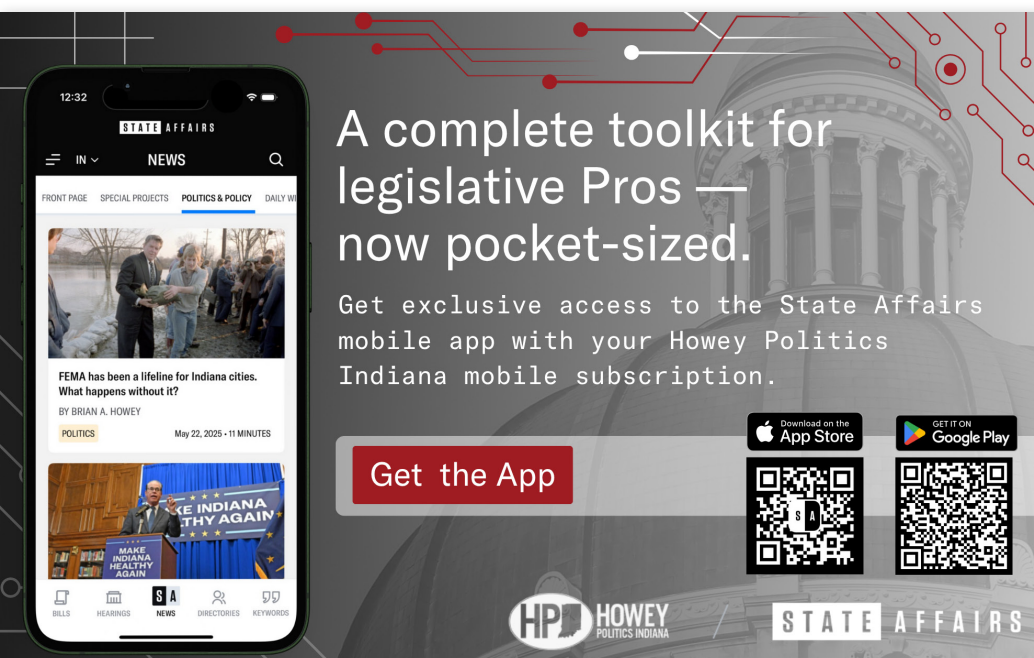
[York Times](#). Those tariffs affected Indiana's grain markets as China turned toward Brazil.

How will the financial markets react to the new Trump tariffs? Squawk Box economist Andrew Ross Sorkin told MSNBC's "Morning Joe" on Monday, "They're taking this in stride. Most think it's part of a negotiation. Will he back down and set another date? We'll see. There won't be a deal and the date will get pushed, or it will be on a deal that will be more favorable terms."

But *The New York Times* analysis on Monday was this: "Foreign governments are puzzled about what, exactly Mr. Trump wants, given that the negotiations have not produced the kind of deal he finds acceptable. The administration also appears to lack the time or bandwidth to make deals with more than a handful of the trading partners Mr. Trump is now threatening. As a result, there is a growing sense that what the president actually wants are tariffs that would block foreign products from the United States, rather than deals that could boost trade and open markets."

The [Wall Street Journal Editorial Board](#) observed Monday, "Would Tariff Man please take a summer vacation for the good of the nation? Mr. Trump seems to think that his unpredictability is a negotiating advantage. But keeping trading partners guessing — along with investors and U.S. companies with global supply chains — isn't a recipe for economic strength."

Speaking on ABC's "[This Week](#)" Sunday morning, Kevin Hassett, director of



A complete toolkit for legislative Pros — now pocket-sized.

Get exclusive access to the State Affairs mobile app with your Howey Politics Indiana mobile subscription.

Get the App

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

HP HOWEY POLITICS INDIANA

STATE AFFAIRS

Tariffs, from page 3

the U.S. National Economic Council, said Trump has seen “some sketches of deals” negotiated by his advisers but thinks the deals “need to be better.”



“These tariffs are real if the president doesn’t get a deal that he thinks is good enough,” Hassett said. “But, you know, conversations are ongoing, and we’ll see where the dust settles.”

Yes, the whims of change.

Brian A. Howey is senior writer and columnist for *Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs*. Find him on X @hwypol and on Bluesky @hwypol.bsky.social.

Faster news, fewer clicks

Get the State Affairs Mobile App.
Now on Apple and Android.



STATE AFFAIRS



Caitlin Clark, from page 1



Birch Bayh with son Evan Bayh, wife Marvella Bayh and an unidentified woman during his 1962 U.S. Senate campaign in Indiana. (Credit: Senatorial Papers of Birch Bayh, University of Indiana)

She later met [Vigo County farmer Birch Bayh](#) at a speech competition in Chicago. Two decades later, as a U.S. senator, Birch would write and pass [Title IX](#). This new law opened the door for a generation of female athletes looking for the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

“She was qualified to go any place and do anything,” Sen. Bayh said in a 2004 [Indiana University Law Repository](#) interview with Julia Lamber. “That was the first taste of discrimination she had ever experienced. It had a profound impact on her.

“We both determined we were going to get involved with the political process,”

he explained. “A lot of people back in Oklahoma, had she stayed there, said she could have been governor. This was a profound decision, a statement of love on her part, to give that up and to come back and spend her life with this corn, soybean, and hog farmer.”

Sen. Bayh had worked to pass the [Equal Rights Amendment](#), which ultimately failed to muster the needed 38 states needed to ratify it. But on Feb. 28, 1972, the Indiana Democrat introduced the ERA’s equal education provision as an amendment. What came to be known as “Title IX” of the Education Amendments of 1972 was passed into law on June 23, 1972.

“We decided we would add an amendment, Title IX, to a higher education authorization bill — add an extra title to that legislation, which seemed to be a very appropriate place to put it,” Sen. Bayh told Lamber. “Somebody made a point of order that in this bill there’s no mentioning of sex. And, because it doesn’t mention sex, we can’t put this amendment in here. But really, how could you say it’s non-germane to provide for non-discrimination?”

What followed was a “knock-down, drag-out debate” over a point of order “as a way of keeping this from succeeding.”

“We later realized that the Supreme Court of the United States said you have no power to limit the ratification process in the Supreme Court that was not contained in the original Constitution. As we were adjourning this meeting of the [Judiciary] committee, Sen. Strom Thurmond came rushing up the stairs, asking, ‘Had we passed that woman’s thing?’

“I said, ‘Yes, Strom, it was unanimous,’ ” Sen. Bayh recalled.

“ ‘OK, mark me as ‘aye’ too,’ ” Thurmond responded.

Sen. Bayh also found opposition within academia. Legendary Notre Dame athletic director Moose Krause lobbied against Title IX. “Moose said, ‘Senator, you are going to destroy the Notre Dame football program.’

“I said, ‘Help me understand — I’ve read this piece of legislation several Times, and where does this mean that the next time you play in a bowl game that your adversary is going to have 12 men on field and you’re going to only have 11?’ ”

Bayh told Lamber, “Of course, they were expressing the feeling that a lot of athletic directors still have. The real problem, I’d say the hurdle, was getting equality of participants between men and women because of the number of participants in their football programs and the amount of dollars spent in that program. It’s a very expensive program. The general fallback is that the football program is necessary to support all the other athletic programs.”

Since 1972, universities have figured out many of the athletic funding challenges, with many football programs funding sports for both genders.

Sen. Bayh and House Subcommittee on Education Chair Edith Green of Oregon decided to ask women’s equality organizations not to lobby Congress to help get Title IX passed, the rationale being that drawing more attention could also bring opposition.

“They didn’t want to wake the bear,” Jay Berman, Bayh’s chief of staff, told the NCAA’s Greg Johnson. “It was an incredibly strategic move, and it worked. If you look at the U.S. Supreme Court decisions regarding Title IX, the justices look at the history and one person is cited, and that’s Birch Bayh.”

Lamber asked Bayh if Title IX has had residual impacts outside of sports.

“It has been!” he responded. “I don’t know what the numbers are on the Indiana University campus but I do know graduate numbers. I know that the professional schools are now admitting women who are in the top 10%; almost any law school is going to be at least half women or even more. And the smartest ones are going to be women. I got my alumni magazine from Purdue that had a picture of the new dean of engineering, Linda Katehi, on the front cover page. Hot damn! There was an institution, my alma mater; I knew early on when I was in the Senate that there were no women in the School of Veterinary Medicine.”

The Bayhs’ ‘greatest achievement’

“We spent 26½ years together with Marvella teaching me about what it was

really like being a woman in a man's world," Sen. Bayh said in an account by the NCAA's Johnson. "Without her, I know I wouldn't understand the importance of this legislation."

Bayh told Lamber: "Marvella was the most influential person in my life, bar none. She had been discriminated against and thus had a personal experience.

"We are all familiar with the stereotype of women as pretty things who go to college to find a husband; go on to postgraduate education because they want a more interesting husband; and finally marry, have children and never work again," Bayh said on the Senate floor as he introduced Title IX. "The desire of many schools not to waste a 'man's place' on a woman stems from such stereotyped notions. But the facts absolutely contradict these myths about the 'weaker sex' and it is time to change our operating assumptions."

"He always said this is his single greatest achievement," Berman told Johnson. This, from a U.S. senator who wrote two amendments to the U.S. Constitution. "We didn't think Title IX would have the impact that it has had on sports. But he was just as concerned about women not having the opportunity to play sports as he was about not being able to get into medical school or law school."

The awakening

Though Title IX became law in 1972, its impact has been gradual. That year, the Indiana High School Athletic Association hired Patricia Roy as director of girls' athletics. In 1976, Warsaw's Tigers won the first girls' state basketball championship, with the *IndyStar* reporting more than 7,000 fans watched at Hinkle Fieldhouse. In 1982, Louisiana Tech won the first NCAA Division I women's tournament.

The WNBA was formed in 1997, but it took another two decades before Caitlin Clark began transforming the league into a media juggernaut. Clark became a star at the University of Iowa (where girls' prep basketball has always been bigger than the boys'). Her final NCAA championship game drew 4 million more TV viewers than the men's. The Indiana Fever drafted Clark in April 2024.

Author Christine Brennan's new book, "[On Her Game: Caitlin Clark and the Revolution in Women's Sports](#)," chronicles this surge of collegiate and pro games. Clark and the Fever have been selling out not only Gainbridge Fieldhouse but also arenas nationwide.

"What was going on?" Brennan wrote in her introduction. "Was this because Clark is white and straight in a league that is 74% Black or mixed-race, with a sizable gay population? Was it because of her eight-year, \$28 million Nike shoe deal? Was it jealousy? Was it all of the above?"

Brennan told *USA Today*, "I have never seen women's sports explode in this way and the nation absolutely fall in love with a women's team sport athlete. ... I was doing some TV work on this Caitlin Clark phenomenon and really just wanted to tell the story of this phenomenal athlete, but also place it in history, American culture, Title IX. All of that comes to play where we are, with the girl next door all grown up and selling out arenas and having millions watch her on TV. ...

"She's really, yes, a basketball player, but really an entertainer. She's the high-wire act, and I think once you understand that, you can begin to understand the fascination that the nation has with her."

Pro female athletes still face hurdles. Clark's WNBA salary is a mere \$76,000, compared with a comparable NBA player's \$12 million.

Brennan began her prep athletic career in the early years of Title IX. "We didn't know what we didn't have," she told *USA Today*. "Title IX might be the most important law in our country over the last 53 years, but we're just beginning to see the breakthroughs with women who played sports, who are now running for Congress and winning in the Senate. We will have a woman president, many women presidents, throughout the '40s and '50s in this country, maybe the '30s. The common denominator for all those young women will be that they played sports because of Title IX and learned how to not only win at a young age but lose at a young age. ...

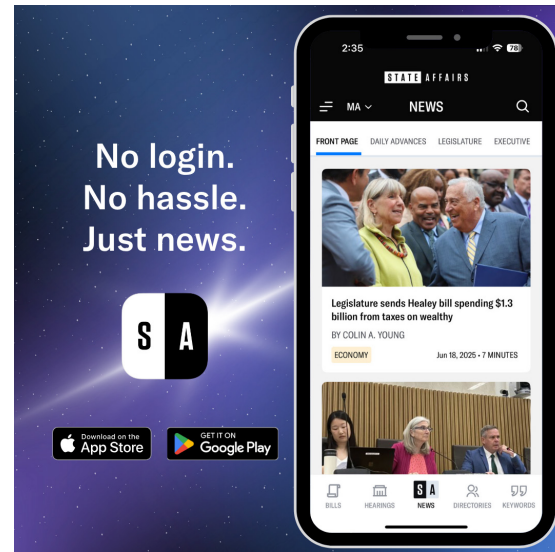
"To see what these young women have

Caitlin Clark, from page 6

now, it can almost bring tears to your eyes,” Brennan added of Clark’s coming legacy. “I hope ... that we will be looking at her as the beginning of something incredible. ... That’s the hope, that this is just the beginning. ... This is the moment; this is the time.”

At such a moment, an opportunity should be traced to Marvella Belle Hern Bayh.

Brian A. Howey is senior writer and columnist for *Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs*. Find him on X [@hwypol](#) and on Bluesky [@hwypol.bsky.social](#).



Indiana congressional races take shape

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY

It’s been more than a decade since an Indiana congressional incumbent lost a primary reelection bid, when Treasurer Richard Mourdock upset U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar in 2012.



U.S. Reps. Victoria Spartz, André Carson and Jim Baird (Credit: U.S. Congress)



Since the reapportioned maps of 2011, not a single U.S. House seat in Indiana has changed parties since 2012 (Republican Jackie Walorski won Democrat Joe Donnelly’s open 2nd Congressional District seat). This essentially means most of the action has moved to primary races.

After scanning second-quarter [Federal Election Commission reports](#), we find three potentially interesting 2026 primary races taking shape. They are:

4th Congressional District: State Rep. Craig Haggard is on record saying he will challenge U.S. Rep. Jim Baird. If the incumbent Republican declines to seek another term, state Rep. Beau Baird is expected to run for his father’s seat. Haggard posted \$49,360 in receipts in the quarter and has \$83,700 in cash on hand.

Congressional races, from page 7

The senior Baird raised \$68,336 and had \$139,715 in cash on hand. Baird is a self-funding-capable candidate and lists an outstanding \$210,000 loan to himself from a previous campaign. The congressman's 64.7% of the vote in May 2024 ward off two Republican primary challengers, with Charles Bookwalter drawing 27.2% in support while John Piper had 8%. Baird won the general election with 64.8%.

5th CD: A key parlor game from Washington to Carmel is, what will U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz do next? During the 2024 cycle, she suggested she would retire, only to reverse course just before the filing deadline. It looks as if she will mount a reelection bid after raising \$421,892 for the quarter while making \$616,819 in disbursements. Why spend more than \$600,000 if the plan is to retire? Spartz reported \$63,124 in cash on hand, and being a self-funding-capable candidate, she still lists a \$350,000 loan to herself on the report.

All eyes are on former state representative Chuck Goodrich, who raised \$5.48 million in his challenge to Spartz in 2024. The self-funding Goodrich listed a \$4.6 million loan to himself from that campaign. His FEC filing has not been updated for the 2026 cycle. His end-of-year 2024 report showed \$25,077 in cash on hand.

The key to a Goodrich rematch against Spartz would be to keep the field down to just a handful of candidates. In 2024, Spartz faced eight challengers, winning the primary with 39.1%, compared with 33.2% for Goodrich. Spartz was reelected with 56.6% in the general election, easily swamping Democrat Deborah Pickett, with 38%, as well as a Libertarian and an independent.

7th CD: Since 1997, Indianapolis has been represented in Congress by a Carson. U.S. Rep. Julia Carson served until she died in 2007. Her grandson, André Carson,

won a special election caucus with 46%, while Woody Myers received 24%, David Orentlicher 21%, and Carolene Mays 8%. Carson was set to face Republican state Rep. Jon Elrod in the general election, but Elrod dropped out. Gabrielle Campo was selected by a party caucus to replace Elrod.

Carson is now facing a Democratic challenge from George Hornedo, a 34-year-old Democratic consultant. Carson outraised Hornedo \$212,302 to \$157,960 in the second quarter. But the Hornedo campaign notes it raised \$115,960 from individuals, compared with \$46,944 for Carson. Carson posted a \$481,727 cash balance on March 31.

"We're not waiting for permission," Hornedo said in a statement announcing the new FEC report. "We're building something new — with people — and we're just getting started. This campaign is about bringing real leadership back to Indianapolis — leadership that shows up, tells the truth, and actually builds power for our communities. The response from Congressman Carson's team tells you everything: they know this is viable, and they know the city's ready for something new."

Former Democratic Congressman Tony Coelho, who chairs the Hornedo campaign, observed, "What George accomplished last quarter isn't just impressive. It's historic for this district. I've chaired presidential campaigns and led the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. I know what it takes to win. George is building this campaign from the ground up — with people — and these numbers make one thing clear: he's putting together a winning coalition."



STATE AFFAIRS

A new way to access Howey Politics. Download the State Affairs app.

✓ Keyword Alerts

✓ Hearings & Transcriptions

✓ Insider News

✓ Legislative Directories

✓ Bill Tracking

Power your policy with one platform.

→ pro.stateaffairs.com/in

Download on the
App Store

GET IT ON
Google Play



Congressional races, from page 8

As for the general election, there is only one nominally competitive seat: the 1st CD. In 2024, Democratic U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan defeated Republican Lake County Councilman Randy Niemeyer, 53.4% to 44.9%. Mrvan posted \$590,159 for the second quarter this year, made \$299,392 in disbursements and had an ending cash balance of \$379,227.

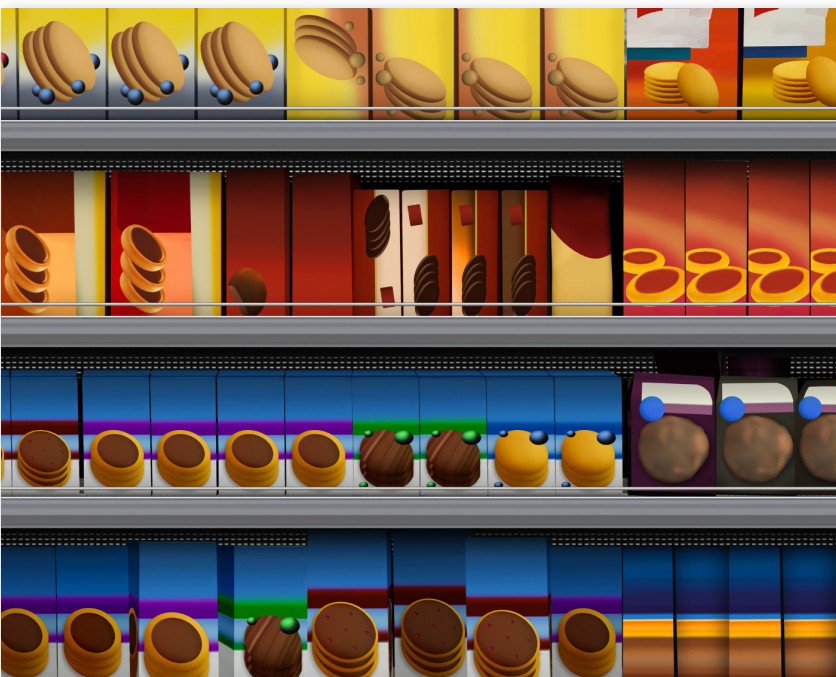
James Schenke of Lafayette has announced he will challenge Mrvan after losing to state Rep. Chris Campbell in 2024. *The Exponent* reported that Schenke was arrested on the day before Election Day for allegedly violating a protective order.

Schenke said in a campaign statement, “For too long, northwest Indiana has been taken for granted by career politicians more loyal to Washington than to the people who sent them there. I’m running to bring real representation to the working families, veterans, parents and small business owners of Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties. I won’t be bought. I won’t be bullied. And I sure won’t be silent.”

Brian A. Howey is senior writer and columnist for *Howey Politics Indiana/State Affairs*. Find him on X @hwypol and on Bluesky @hwypol.Bsky.social.

The upside of bad policy? A golden age of economic commentary

BY MICHAEL J. HICKS



Grocery store aisle. (Credit: Hitra)



MUNCIE, Ind. — I have the good fortune of living in a veritable golden age of economic columnists. There is such an informational cascade of policy debacles, silly ideas and mesmerizingly idiotic claims that the hard part of writing this column lies in picking the ripest fruit from the cornucopia of ridiculousness.

The newest of these comes to us from New York’s mayoral primaries. The Democratic winner is 33-year-old Zohran Mamdani, who defeated former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

There are many reasons why Mamdani might have won. Cuomo is a serial sexual harasser who had to resign as governor in the wake of a criminal investigation. That sort of behavior these days seems more acceptable for a federal cabinet position, not the mayoral race of the world’s greatest city.

Mamdani has a compelling personal story. The Democratic socialist is young, dynamic and optimistic about the future. This is a significant departure from the vitriolic anger of the GOP and likely resonated with lots of voters in New York and elsewhere.

Mamdani identifies common problems — housing costs are high in New York, as are food prices. However, he has made the frequent error of mistaking the cause of these problems, leading to silly policy prescriptions. Some of his ideas blow right past the threshold of ridiculously bad.

To fix high housing costs and food prices, Mamdani proposes rent controls and government-owned grocery stores. The folly of rent controls is a topic every college economics professor teaches in introductory economics. The key lesson is that price controls lead to long-term shortages.

Ironically, the only place in the United States that has had any long-term price controls is New York. The shortages that resulted from rental price controls dating to World War II continued to plague the city at least through the 1990s. Indeed, apartment shortages were a staple gag of nearly every other episode of “Friends” and “Seinfeld.”

Much of the high cost of housing in New York can be explained by the city’s popularity and productivity. For example, worker productivity in New York City is about 40% higher than in Indiana. But a large part of the problem lies in government restrictions. Zoning, in particular, has restricted new housing expansion for decades. If Mamdani were serious about fixing the housing problems in New York, he’d unleash the free market, not hobble it with more regulation.

As silly, counterproductive and misguided as a rent control policy might be, it is downright sensible and clever compared to the notion of a city-run grocery store providing an antidote to high food prices.

A staple of Cold War reality was a photograph of Boris Yeltsin confronting an American grocery store for the first time — his face showing shock at the selection and pricing.

New York is abuzz with entrepreneurs who, as Scottish economist Adam Smith noted, are possessed of the natural human “propensity to truck, barter and exchange.” Food in New York will always be more expensive than in Peoria, Illinois, but the existence of food deserts and exorbitant prices is not the fault of free markets. It is the fault of government interference in free markets.

If Mamdani were serious about bettering New Yorkers’ lives, he would unleash the entrepreneurs among his constituents. Dear reader: If you imagine a city-operated grocery store would offer better prices, more variety or superior service, you’re in the

same camp as those who imagine that tariffs are paid by foreign importers or boost factory production here at home.

This abundance of poor policy ideas in today’s economic universe is a great gift to this scribbler.

I know Fox News will soon make much hay of Mamdani’s bizarre policies, as well it should. But I have some advice for readers on how to deal with the economic folly of others. It is a military dictum from my youth.

We Hoosiers should be glad for a Mamdani candidacy — somewhere far, far away. As Americans, we live in a large and glorious laboratory of ideas. We should watch thoughtfully as someone else sprints out and draws the proverbial fire of bad economic ideas — as is Mamdani. Be certain that the rest of the country is doing the same with Hoosiers and getting plenty of lessons as well.

In the meantime, we should be far more focused on addressing policies that hamper our freedom and economic progress. We have plenty of those problems here at home and in our national policy environment. Let other folks, be they New Yorkers or Chicagoans, struggle with their own folly.

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. Contact him at cberdirector@bsu.edu.

It turns out the government does valuable things

BY LEE HAMILTON



BLOOMINGTON, Ind. —

While all eyes have been on the Capitol Hill maneuvering around the 900-page bill

carrying out President Donald Trump’s agenda, something interesting has been happening in federal agencies: They’ve been bringing laid-off workers back. [CNN](#) reported in late June that they’ve been “scrambl[ing] to fill critical gaps in services left by the Department of Government Efficiency-led effort to shrink the federal workforce.”

Not long after that story appeared, [The Washington Post](#) published another, reporting that DOGE “has lost the power to control the government’s process for awarding billions of dollars in federal funds.” Instead, individual federal departments and agencies will again be able to post funding opportunities directly on the government website used by organizations and businesses nationwide.

But that’s only after grants for funding services such as health workers who care for patients with Alzheimer’s disease and efforts to prevent older adults’ falls were delayed and, possibly, derailed.

Meanwhile, much of the drama in Congress around the mega-legislation — which will add significantly to the national debt, strip millions of Americans off Medicaid and cut taxes on the wealthy — has flowed from a simple fact: The bill is extremely unpopular.



U.S. Capitol with flag. (Credit: Toshe_O via Getty Images Pro)

As Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina — who decided [not to run for reelection](#) after announcing his opposition to the bill — put it to reporters: “I don’t bow to anybody when the people of North Carolina are at risk, and this puts them at risk.” The same is true in states around the country.

Taken by themselves, any of these storylines would be interesting. But taken together, they point to one conclusion: As Americans, we may not be fond of the federal government, but on the whole we like the services it provides or pays for.

We like government that’s efficient and on top of its game. We like having an effective military, warnings of approaching hurricanes and an air traffic control system that keeps us safe. We even like the social safety net — because among other things, Medicaid helps keep your neighbors healthy and our hospitals operating, and Social Security and Medicare mean you don’t have to go bankrupt to help your aging parents or grandparents live decent lives.

That CNN story is instructive. As Eric Bradner reported, even though the administration is backtracking, “the rapid rehiring is a warning sign that it has lost more capacities and expertise that could prove critical — and difficult to replace — in the months and years ahead. ‘There are time bombs all over the place in the federal government because of this,’ said Elaine Kamarck, the director of the Center for Effective Public Management at the Brookings Institution. ‘They’ve wreaked havoc across nearly every agency.’ ”

So the federal government is trying to regain the capacity it lost on everything from mine safety to preventing childhood lead poisoning to pursuing food safety to responding to bird flu.

There is no question that it could work more efficiently or that you can find instances of waste and abuse. But I’m struck by a quote from a former DOGE staffer who gave an interview to [NPR](#) in which he said, “I personally was pretty surprised, actually, at how efficient the government was. This isn’t to say that it can’t be made more efficient ... but these aren’t necessarily fraud, waste and abuse.”

This country is engaged in an experiment. The bill that the GOP leadership in Congress has muscled through will reduce federal spending on health care by over \$1 trillion — most of that coming from Medicaid — and cut up to 12 million people off health insurance over the next decade.

These are unprecedented numbers, and those cuts will reverberate throughout our country — in rural hospitals, in community health centers, in neighborhoods where health care workers have been laid off, in spending Medicaid enrollees will now have to devote to their physicians rather than their local stores. And that's before we even get to cuts to food stamps and clean energy, or the massive increase in spending on immigration crackdowns.

We can't know what the result of all this will be. But what we do know is that when you change what the federal government does, you change Americans' lives.

Please note: Lee Hamilton's column will be on hiatus until Aug. 20, 2025.

Lee Hamilton is a senior adviser for the Indiana University Center on Representative Government, a distinguished scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies and a professor of practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

How did we close Indiana's budget gap?

BY MORTON J. MARCUS



Indiana Statehouse. (Credit: Mark Curry)



INDIANAPOLIS — Not too many days ago, there was panic in the streets of Indianapolis. The state had planned for \$2 billion too much revenue. Our Legislature had to cut spending and raise revenues to meet the new forecast.

As I read coverage of that crisis, I didn't notice who had made the erroneous forecast. Was it a state agency? Perhaps a panel of economists from the state universities? Or some outside, commercial forecasting business?

Was there to be any retribution, any punishment, for the dastardly deed?

(Now I must pause. Lately, a good friend has upbraided me for failing to suggest solutions to problems identified in these columns. I will attempt to do that.)

Budget gap, from page 12

Kneecapping. Take the miscreant(s) out into the alley and break some kneecaps. It will be a deterrent and influence future forecasters, proving our state's bold sincerity about fiscal matters.

What did our sullen solons actually do? They immediately [raised the cigarette tax by \\$2 per pack](#) and confidently announced that an additional \$800 million would be raised by that act alone.

That was good. [It might deter some smoking activity](#). But we should also issue tickets to all those folks smoking outside in the open air. You've seen them in front of buildings, furtive fumers exercising their rights as they understand them. Fine them and confiscate their smoking materials.

My positively positive program would have included increasing taxes on tickets for professional athletic competitions and musical events where the music was written within the past 50 years.

Further, terminate the reduction of the Indiana income tax rate. Next, place a 1% added tax on household incomes over \$200,000 a year. This should yield Indiana \$100 million or more in annual revenue.

The major problem of America is too much money in the hands of consumers and too little money in the hands of governments.

Our streets and infrastructure are in poor repair. Our children are poorly educated. Our TV sets and vehicles are egregiously oversized. The solution: Reduce consumer consumption.

This is only a matter of tactical taxation and robust regulation. Start with automobiles. Tax them by their weight and footprint. That data is readily available for all vehicles on the road. The tax could be put in place within the next year.

Worried about data centers? Easy! Use marginal cost pricing. If the amount of energy used rises, charge those who use more than they did previously for the added costs of production. Don't push the bill onto Steady Eddy, the consumer.

Simple solutions for serious problems. Perfectly cheerful and consistent with both conservative and liberal thought.

Morton J. Marcus is an economist formerly at the IU Kelley School of Business. Reach him at mortonjmarcus@gmail.com. Follow him and John Guy on "Who Gets What?" wherever podcasts are available or at mortonjohn.libsyn.com.

Access capitol insider intelligence on the go.



Get the State Affairs Mobile App.
Now on Apple and Android.

