

# '24 Power 50: Precursor to a volatile year

## A Trump/Biden rematch, and INGov race top our Power 50 list

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY

**INDIANAPOLIS** - There have been a number of fateful years in the American experience. There was 1776 with the American revolution, the 1800 showdown between John Adams's federalists and Thomas Jefferson's democratic-republicans, the 1859-61 prelude to the Civil War, 1941 as World War II came home, and 1968 when war, assassination and political instability roiled dozens of cities and campuses.



President Trump endorses Mike Braun after the 2018 U.S. Senate primary, at a MAGA rally in Elkhart. (AP Photo).

The current year of 2024 could join these consequential ranks.

The coming rematch between President Joe Biden and Republican Donald Trump is being portrayed as an election with, literally, democracy at stake.

**CONTINUED ON PG. 5**

## Trump lessons from Rome

BY JOSHUA CLAYBOURN

**EVANSVILLE** — In a landscape where the law and politics intertwine, Colorado and Maine's decision to bar former President Donald Trump from their primary ballots resonates deeply within the heart of American democracy. This isn't a mere legal maneuver; it's a high-stakes dance on the tightrope of American electoral politics, balancing constitutional law and political strategy.



At the heart of these decisions lies

**CONTINUED ON PG. 2**

## Quote of the Week

**"I think they feel this is the way they're going to try and win, and that's not the way it goes. It'll be bedlam in the country. It's a very bad thing. It's a very bad precedent. As we said, it's the opening of a Pandora's box."**



**Former President Donald J. Trump, on Tuesday following a federal hearing on presidential immunity.**

# Claybourn: Lessons from Rome



the rarely invoked insurrection clause of the 14th Amendment, a relic from the Civil War that now gains newfound significance. Essentially, it prohibits individuals who have actively worked against the Constitution through insurrection from holding any government position.

Ultimately, this issue forces us to ponder how, as a nation, we determine who ascends to the highest echelons of leadership and who does not. It's a question that doesn't merely seek an answer; it demands profound introspection and contemplation about the very essence of our democracy.

Much of this boils down to one crucial point: Republican voters and influencers refrained from decisively repudiating Trump after the turbulent events of Jan. 6. As a result, certain Republicans, and an even larger number of Democrats, have resorted to legal measures as a final recourse to address what they see as a failure by the electorate to uphold democratic norms.

History helps us grasp our current situation, back to a time when another great republic grappled with the looming threat of tyranny. The Roman Republic's struggle, particularly during the era of Lucius Cornelius Sulla, offers a valuable parallel.

After seizing power violently in 83 B.C., Sulla attempted to implement a series of political reforms with the aim of preventing others from replicating his actions. He enshrined in law what is often referred to as the "course of offices." This was a predetermined sequence of offices that Roman politicians would hold before attaining the coveted position of one of the two consulships for a given year. Sulla envisioned a structured system of office-holding, with defined intervals between offices and a rotation among commanders.

Regrettably for Sulla and those who supported republican ideals, there was insufficient political resolve to uphold these laws. Pompey, Sulla's most significant officer, openly defied the new regulations, bypassing several intermediate steps to reach the consulship. Subsequently, Caesar and Crassus obtained "extended" commands, which eventually allowed them to replicate Sulla's power grab. In due course, the Roman Republic succumbed, giving way to the emergence of the Roman Empire, centralized under a single dictator.



Sulla's laws proved ineffective in preventing this transition. Neither the judges nor the senators fulfilled their duties; instead, they preferred to delegate their responsibilities to military commanders in

the hope of salvation. However, the ultimate source of Roman tyranny lay with voters who placed their trust in demagogues. Voters were too reluctant to say "no."

Repeatedly, history offers this lesson: Laws and traditions require more than mere existence; they demand unwavering commitment from both the public and leaders. Regardless of their strength, legal and constitutional frameworks cannot enforce themselves.

Today, as we confront our own challenges, the lessons from Rome reverberate with striking relevance. American democracy cannot be single-handedly safeguarded by individuals like Robert Mueller or Jack Smith or Maine's secretary of state, or even institutions like the Supreme Court. Our republic, much like Rome, depends on the collective

## HOWEY POLITICS INDIANA

**Brian A. Howey**  
Senior Writer & Columnist  
bhowey2@gmail.com

**Mary Lou Howey**  
Editor

**Alison Bethel**  
Chief Content Officer & Editor-in-Chief

**Subscriptions**  
HPI, HPI Daily Wire  
sales@stateaffairs.com

**Contact HPI**  
Email: bhowey2@gmail.com  
Howey's cell: 317.506.0883  
Business Office: 800.680.7479  
Tips: tips@stateaffairs.com

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will and actions of our citizenry.

When confronting any politician who challenges democratic values or entertains authoritarian rhetoric, it is crucial to recognize that our salvation cannot hinge solely on court rulings. If there is no corresponding political will to uphold them, such rulings hold no more value than the paper they are written on. The duty to safeguard the integrity and principles of our republic lies within us, the citizens, particularly with voters. There exists no savior apart from our own collective effort to vote and to persuade our fellow countrymen.

Moreover, the underlying strategy is destined for failure. Even if the Supreme Court were to uphold Colorado's and Maine's decisions, the outcome would simply be that states would make the call. Trump wouldn't be removed from all 50 states, and it's highly improbable that swing states would take such action. So, what's the purpose?

Even if Trump were excluded from state primary contests in blue states, and even if he were to fall short on delegates, the GOP could still nominate him at the convention — precisely what would occur if Republicans sensed an attempt by Leftists to manipulate their nomination.

In this high-stakes game, the attempt to bar Trump from ballots is not just futile, but it risks a dangerous backlash. History teaches us that the true guardians of democracy are not the courts or the laws, but the people themselves. Legal maneuvers, like those in Colorado and Maine, might feel like strong moves, but they're akin to playing chess with checkers pieces in a game that demands deeper strategic thinking.

The lesson from Rome is clear: Laws and court decisions are not panaceas. They didn't stop Sulla's successors; they won't stop modern-day political maneuvering. If Trump is barred from some state ballots, it's not a knockout punch. It's a mere jab, one easily countered by a political right hook in the form of a convention nomination. And that would be the ultimate irony — Democrats inadvertently aiding Trump's renomination, playing right into the narrative of a political martyr battling

a system rigged against him.

We're at a critical juncture where reliance on legal tactics to combat perceived threats to democracy might actually weaken it. Barring Trump might satisfy a momentary urge for retribution, but it does nothing to address the deeper issues eroding our democratic foundations. It's a Band-Aide on a bullet wound.

We, the people, are the bedrock of our republic. Our power lies in the ballot box and the marketplace of ideas, not in legal gambits. The path to preserving our democratic ideals isn't through exclusion but through engagement, education, and the relentless pursuit of truth. In the end, our democracy's fate lies not in courtrooms or legislatures, but in our hands. It's time we remember that before it's too late. Our republic's future depends not on silencing voices but on strengthening our own.

**Joshua Claybourn is an attorney and historian. Visit him online at [JoshuaClaybourn.com](https://JoshuaClaybourn.com) and on X @JoshuaClaybourn. Institutional Challenges: Trump, Insurrection, and the Primaries**

## HPI Power 50, from page 1

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear two cases in the next month determining whether Trump can be kept off state ballots due to the 14th Amendment's Article III, and another on Trump's claim of blanket presidential immunity. The Iowa caucuses next week could determine whether Trump will glide to his third nomination.

"Today we are here to answer the most important of questions: Is democracy still America's sacred cause?" Biden said at Valley Forge last week in a speech commemorating the Jan. 6 insurrection. "This isn't rhetorical, academic, or hypothetical. Whether democracy is still America's sacred cause is the most urgent question of our time. It is

what the 2024 election is all about. We all know who Donald Trump is. The question we have to answer is, 'Who are we?'"

Trump responded in Iowa, denouncing Biden's warnings as a "pathetic fear-mongering campaign event" and called the sitting president "a true danger to democracy."

Mixed in with the coming presidential pri-

maries and caucuses, Trump could face several criminal trials before the primary and general elections to determine whether he is guilty of 91 felony counts of provoking insurrection and election fraud, and violating Georgia's racketeering statutes. In the American experience, previous indictments would end a political career cold. Trump has actually seen his polling and fundraising numbers stoked with his Republican base after each indictment, each mugshot.

We, as a nation, have never been here before.

It will be an equally consequential year here in Indiana. We will choose our 52nd governor. We will witness whether Republican dominance in the state will extend to a record 24 years. Will we see gender and race barriers broken? Will there be a GOP convention floor fight over the final ticket?

Meanwhile, the national scene will have distinct ramifications in Indiana.

Donald Trump has endorsed —and his imprimatur not only accepted but flaunted — U.S. Sen. Mike Braun's gubernatorial campaign, and U.S. Rep. Jim Banks' U.S. Senate campaign. Following the release of Trump's arrest mugshot in Atlanta, Banks tweeted, "There can be no other candidate in 2024." Braun told Howey Politics in November, "I can tell you that every one of my opponents would have loved to have the endorsement in a state like Indiana."

Trump-ism has also permeated the coming attorney general's race between incumbent Republican Todd Rokita and Democratic challenger Destiny Wells. And it could be impacting the congressional delegation, where U.S. Reps. Greg Pence, Larry Buchson and Victoria Spartz (at least for now) are retiring. Spartz continually cited a dysfunctional GOP leadership, echoing Biden's Trumanesque assertion that this is a "do-nothing" Congress. None of these members of Congress made this Power 50 list.

There are four open congressional seats, and possibly a fifth if U.S. Rep. Jim Baird doesn't follow through on his reelection announcement.

And then there are the issues themselves. Will Indiana's 2022 abortion restrictions stoke female suburban voters? Will the Lebanon LEAP district kick off a war against regional economic development? Will Indiana's status as a cannabis island become a consequential issue?

Every January since 1999 Howey Politics Indiana has presented its "Power 50 List" as a way to forecast who will steer and impact political and policy events of our times. It is forged with input from our subscribers and staff. It is a mix of national

figures with Hoosier roots who could steer the national and state scenarios, and Indiana's leadership at the state and local levels.

Here is the 2024 Howey Politics/State Affairs Indiana Power 50 List:

### 1. Donald J. Trump:

While he started in Queens, built his business legacy and declared for the presidency in Manhattan, and now lives in Florida, Indiana has been a crucial state to the Trump story. He owned one of the Gary casinos, was roasted at the Indianapolis gridiron and in 2016, his Indiana primary victory propelled him to the Republican nomination. His historic upset win over Hillary Clinton was made possible by former Gov. Mike Pence, who as the vice president nominee helped galva-

nize an evangelical base that has become the MAGA cornerstone. More than two dozen Hoosiers played significant roles in his first term, including former Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar and former Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Commissioner Seema Verma. None of these Hoosiers are backing Trump for a second term, with Pence calling his actions leading up to and on Jan. 6, 2021 a "disgrace" and during his recent presidential campaign warned of Trump populism. Now eight years into the Trump era, the former president is the probable GOP presidential nominee this year. Trump has said a second term would be based on "retribution" and vengeance. He has called for the termination of the U.S. Constitution and suggested he would be a "dictator only on day one." Trump has endorsed Sen. Braun for governor and Rep. Banks for the

 **Jim Banks** @Jim\_Banks · 2h  
There can be no other candidate in 2024





Indiana U.S. Senate seat, meaning that not only does Trump see himself as a Hoosier kingmaker, he sucks all the political oxygen away from just about anyone else. Should he be convicted of any of the 91 felonies he faces — particularly prior to the Indiana primary — it's unknown what the impact will be. If you're running for office in Indiana this year, you must be aware of the "Trump factor."

**2. President Joe Biden:** In a recent Republican gubernatorial campaign poll, President Biden's approval in Indiana stood at just 40%. In late June, U.S. Commerce Sec. Gina Raimondo said Indiana would be receiving \$868 million to extend high-speed internet to the proverbial "last mile." These were funds forged by Biden's American Rescue Plan passed by Congress on party-line votes and signed into law in late-2021, which only Indiana Democratic Reps. Andre Carson and Frank Mrvan helped pass. But this latest \$868 million is only a fraction of federal funds flowing into Indiana since Biden took office in 2021. In May it was announced Indiana's Family Social Services Administration would receive \$29 million in funding for opioid crisis response and substance use disorder services. There is the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which is expected to bring Indiana \$6.9 billion over five years in Federal highway formula funding for highways and bridges. And then there is the American Rescue Plan, passed in 2021 as part of COVID-19 pandemic relief. Its Indiana impact includes: The \$500 million first round of Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI), which has generated billions of dollars in additional investments. The state's unemployment rate has fallen from 4.7% in January 2021 to 3.1% in December 2022 (it stood at 3.7% in November). There have been a record 170,000 new small business applications. ARP provided direct pandemic recovery funds to all 625 Indiana towns, cities and counties — avoiding cuts and investing in public safety, housing, workforce development and other critical areas. Over 280 school districts in Indiana were provided funding to support academic recovery, student mental health, and to reopen safely. Some 3,270 child care programs in Indiana received support to help keep their doors open, impacting up to 157,000 children. Working family tax relief through the expanded child tax credit totaled 822,000 for Indiana families with 1.4 million children. There were 1,188 Indiana restaurants that received vital relief through the American Rescue Plan's Restaurant Revitalization Fund. Biden signed the CHIPS and Science Act, co-authored by U.S. Sen. Todd Young (but without the support of most of the Indiana GOP congressional delegation) in August 2022. The Semiconductor Industry Association cites four Indiana projects since Biden signed the CHIPS Act, including Skywater in West Lafayette (\$1.8 billion in investments and 750 jobs), Trusted Semiconductor Solutions in Oden (\$34 million invested and 40 jobs), NHanced Semiconductors of Oden (\$236 million invested with 413 jobs); and Everspin Technologies (also of Oden, which is located about five miles from the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center) which is expected to generate 35 jobs. With a record like that ...



**3. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun:** Five years after defeating three sitting members of Congress for an Indiana U.S. Senate seat, Braun is facing an unprecedented five-person field for the GOP gubernatorial nomination. Internal polling by Braun and rival campaigns show him leading (he says by double digits), giving him the aura of a frontrunner. While he self-funded in 2018 to the tune of \$11 million, he posted \$2 million for the latest reporting period and has \$4 million cash on hand with a more traditional approach to fundraising. Braun will make the high cost of health care, fentanyl and the southern border, and an opposition to China his main campaign themes. He has been endorsed by Trump and Club for Growth. Should Trump be convicted of any of the 91 criminal charges he faces before the primary, it is unknown how that could impact Braun's race.

**4. Gov. Eric Holcomb:** The governor enters his final year in office with a 61.3% approval rating while 30% disapprove (among Republicans he stood at 74%/20%). His career arc has been untraditional, going from a challenger for a U.S. Senate seat, to being appointed lieutenant governor in March 2016, then receiving the gubernatorial nomination after then-Gov. Mike Pence accepted Donald Trump's vice presidential nomination that following July. In 2020, Holcomb faced the first pandemic in a century and imposed several mandates that were opposed by social conservatives. In 2022, he signed into law some of the most far-reaching abortion restrictions in the nation. As for his hallmarks as governor, he has used federal pandemic and infrastructure funds to extend broadband into rural areas, broaden the state's trail system, and has made his-

toric investments in Indiana's health system, while on course to complete the I-69 and U.S. 31 freeway projects. The governor unveiled his final Indiana General Assembly session agenda on Jan. 8 that includes priority areas such as child care, education and workforce. "The Hoosier Playbook will assist local leaders locate state resources to further strengthen their communities. From health and wellness initiatives to education and training to cultural amenities and placemaking tools, the state of Indiana seeks to be a partner with our cities, towns, and counties as they work to develop in their own unique ways," Holcomb said. "This Administration and this year's agenda, approaches the work ahead as an all-hands-on deck effort to connect Hoosiers with the assistance they need and when they need it the most." New administrative and legislative initiatives on Gov. Holcomb's 2024 agenda will continue his efforts to increase early childhood education access, affordability, and expansion as well as take additional steps to bolster K-12 literacy efforts. Holcomb will continue his commitment toward reaching the state goal of 95% of third graders reading proficiently by 2027.

### 5. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch:

She is seeking to become the first female Republican gubernatorial nominee. Her main campaign theme is the "Axe the Tax" plan to phase out the state's income tax. Crouch told HPI she believes she will have the \$8 million to \$9 million to successfully compete in the May primary. "I'm running for governor. I'm not a self-funder but I'm running against men

who are," she told Hamilton County Republicans. She told Howey Politics that she is a "different" type of candidate. "No party — Republican or Democrat — has held on to the governor's office for more than 20 years," she said. "We've held it the past 20 years. If we're going to hold on to it we've got to have a different candidate. If you look at the experience at the local, state and legislative levels, there is no comparison. I'm not going to sit in Indianapolis for four years playing it safe just to get reelected. I will be bold and I will be transformative." She adds, "Leaders will always choose the harder right than the easier wrong. I ask for your support. Let's make history together!"

**6. Brad Chambers:** The former Commerce secretary announced in December that he had raised \$51 billion in investments during his two years in office, for which he was paid a salary of \$2. He has built a campaign that includes former GOP chair Kyle Hupfer, Marty Obst and Matt Huckleby. He is expected to post more than \$3 million for the final reporting period after seeding his campaign with a personal \$5 million

check. He has suggested he could spend another \$10 million. "I think we've built a serious campaign in a short period of time, right at four months since I announced," Chambers told Howey Politics in December. "I announced because I looked under the hood of this great state and my saying is 'Indiana is great but it can be even better.' I want to play economic offense to lift people up and that message seems to be resonating." Chambers proposed the Lebanon LEAP district which is controversial

because of a plan to pipe in water from the Wabash River watershed. If his campaign picks up traction, expect the LEAP proposal to become the campaign's crosshairs.

### 7. U.S. Sen. Todd Young:

The senior senator passed his most important legislation since entering Congress with his CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. It is now bringing a myriad of investments and semiconductor related activity to the state. Young has also been a fierce advocate for continued funding in support of Ukraine's war with Russia. At Notre Dame in November, Young said, "Believe it or not all of these hotspots are connected, in multiple ways. They are connected because Xi, Putin, and Iran collaborate on their major activities. [Journalist] Anne Applebaum has characterized this collaboration as 'Autocracy Inc.' " Young is also the rare Republican to part ways with Donald Trump. "You want a nominee to win the general election. As President Trump says, 'I prefer winners,' " Young



told HuffPost. “He consistently loses. In fact, he has a habit of losing not just his own elections, but losing elections for others. I can’t think of someone worse equipped to bring people together to pass legislation and advance our collective values than the former president. I don’t think conservatives would be well served by electing someone whose core competency seems to be owning someone on Twitter.”

**8. U.S. Rep. Jim Banks:** With a simple statement at the end of January, former Indiana governor Mitch Daniels’ political career came to an end, setting up U.S. Rep. Jim Banks for the GOP’s U.S. Senate nomination in 2024. Trump endorsed Banks on X. Banks, who has also been endorsed by the Indiana Republican Party and Club for Growth, now faces a primary race against Jackson County egg producer John Rust, who is challenging a law that could keep him off the primary ballot. The Indiana Supreme Court is expected to hear the case in January.



**9. House Speaker Todd Huston:** He has the largest caucus to corral, and you never see him sweat. A steady hand of leadership through some unsteady times the past three years, there are rarely any rumors of a lack of confidence in Huston’s ability to get through a legislative calendar and minimize the “crazy” without making the “crazy” feel unrepresented. “Whether it’s growing our workforce, boosting third grade reading proficiency or expanding child care access, we have many of the same goals laid out by Gov. Holcomb,” Huston said on Jan. 8. “We look forward to continuing to work together with our House and Senate colleagues, and the administration on our shared priorities.” Many were disappointed this past year when it became evident that Huston was not going to run for governor, given the wide respect he has from party leaders across the state. Huston has an opportunity to reshape the Statehouse in preparation for the next governor in how he handles the final session of the Holcomb area and positions his caucus for 2024 gains with an injection of “new blood” in the form of races to replace Reps. Donna Schaibley, Jerry Torr, Chuck Goodrich and Bob Cherry in Central Indiana. Huston has also vowed to focus on anti-semitism.

## **10. Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray:**

He said at the Denton’s Legislative Conference in December that the General Assembly will take a serious look specifically into reading proficiency and truancy issues. “Anything good we do in the education system, for those kids who aren’t there, they’re not going to have success,” Bray said of high chronic absenteeism. Bray has also vowed to address the high rate of child care costs and access. “Senate Republicans share several of the governor’s priorities like expanding access to child care and supporting our students — especially as it pertains to ensuring our third graders have the foundational reading skills they need to be successful as they progress in school,” he said.

## **11. Chief of Staff Earl Goode:**

After serving six years as former Gov. Mitch Daniels’ chief of staff, he is now set to finish eight with Gov. Holcomb, making him the longest-serving gubernatorial aide in history — and the most powerful.

## **12. IEDC Chairman David Rosenberg:**

Following another record year at the Indiana Economic Development Corp., Rosenberg will likely be one of the most important Holcomb team members in the governor’s last year as he charges through the tape to run up the score on economic investment. With LEAP being a focal point of the governor’s race, Rosenberg and his team at IEDC will have an opportunity to show its importance and to land even bigger wins there in 2024. If Brad Chambers were to be successful in May, it’s hard to think about a short list for his chief of staff that doesn’t have Rosenberg at the top.

## **13. Attorney General Todd Rokita:**

This Republican becomes the second consecutive attorney general to



have charges brought up by the Indiana Supreme Court Disciplinary Commission. It ruled against him last fall, resulting in a public reprimand, then filed new allegations in late-November. The cases came after Rokita made public comments on Fox News regarding the case of an Indianapolis obstetrician-gynecologist who performed an abortion on a 10-year-old Ohio rape victim. “I deny and was not found to have violated anyone’s confidentiality or any laws,” Rokita said following the second set of allegations. “I was not fined. And I will continue as Indiana’s duly-elected attorney general. Despite the failed attempt to derail our work — which could have disenfranchised nearly 2 million voters, the largest amount in Indiana history for any state office candidate — it all boiled down to a truthful 16-word answer I gave over a year ago during an international media storm caused by an abortionist who put her interests above her patient’s. I received a ‘public reprimand’ for saying that ‘We have this abortion activist acting as a doctor — with a history of failing to report.’ The media, medical establishment and cancel culture, all on cue, supported — and then attempted to vindicate — the abortionist who intentionally exposed personal health information at a political rally all in furtherance of their shared ideological and business interests.” Rokita spent much of the year fighting the Biden administration. He called on the administration to stop its economy-wrecking war on power plants. “These ill-considered rules would force the closure of coal- and natural gas-fired power plants,” Rokita said. “They would put Hoosiers out of work, raise Hoosiers’ energy prices and erode the reliability of our energy grid. We will not stand idly by while federal overreach strangles the Indiana economy.” In December, Rokita announced a \$700 million settlement with Google over Play Store misconduct. In September, Rokita



long odds in breaking the GOP’s two decade hold on the second floor. First, a Democrat has not won a statewide election since Joe Donnelly and Glenda Ritz in 2012. Second, she is not raising much money. She hasn’t

posted a large donation since Aug. 23 when she received \$25,000 from a labor PAC. She raised \$293,552 by Aug. 22, according to an out-going campaign treasurer statement posted on the Indiana Election Division website and had a cash balance of just \$167,662. She opposes arming classroom teachers in response to the recent school shooting trends. She is for abortion access and criticized Lt. Gov. Crouch’s tie-breaking vote on an abortion exclusion amendment.

She favors cannabis reforms. She says she is running because she is “tired of the super-majority’s focus on fringe issues that have nothing to do with the challenges everyday Hoosiers are facing.”

**15. Marc Carmichael:** He is the probable Democratic U.S. Senate nominee, with Dr. Valerie McCray the only other Democrat in the race. Like McCormick, Carmichael faces fundraising challenges, reporting \$73,000 in donations on his September FEC report. But he has a history as a giant killer, upsetting Indiana House Speaker J. Roberts Dailey in 1986. “I know what to do here, after beating Bob Dailey,” Carmichael told HPI in December. “If there’s room on the calendar, I’ll be there. You can count on Carmichael to show up. That’s what I did against Bob Dailey, I just worked and worked.” As for a potential matchup against Rep. Jim Banks, he said, “The Republican Party likes the dictatorship. Democracy is hard. I think the Republicans have given up on it. I haven’t.”

**16. Zachary A. Myers,** U.S. Attorney



brought together every Indiana city, town and county to participate in a historic \$508 million settlement that will bring massive relief to Hoosiers struggling with the devastating effects of the opioid epidemic.

**14. Jennifer McCormick:** The former Republican superintendent of public instruction is the probable Democrat gubernatorial nominee, poised to become, as HPI put it in 2023, the “first swing voter” to win a major party nomination in modern times. She has voted in previous Republican and Democrat primaries. She is also the first modern gubernatorial candidate to have recently switched parties. She faces



for the Southern District of Indiana: All Statehouse eyes are on the U.S. Attorney following the indictment and guilty plea of former state Rep. Sean Eberhart in December for committing honest services fraud. Eberhart faces five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. It's been a generation since there was a political corruption probe centered on the Indiana Statehouse. Myers also gained attention for designing the Southern District's strategic plan, which focuses on addressing gun violence, trafficking of fentanyl and other deadly drugs, protecting and promoting civil rights, as well as complex crimes including human trafficking, cybercrime, child exploitation, economic crimes, and public corruption."

### 17. Sen. Jeff Raatz and Rep. Robert Behning:

These two legislators head the education committees in their respective chambers. Legislative leaders have signaled they want to focus on literacy during the 2024 legislative session, discussing the possibility of holding back more third graders who don't pass the IREAD test. But other issues, such as student cell phone usage in classrooms and chronic absenteeism are likely to come up as well. "I think [we'll take] a hard look at those who are passing on to fourth grade through the good cause exemption,"

Raatz told State Affairs. Behning added, "Reading is the foundation of learning for every subject. With one in five Hoosier third graders below reading proficiency, more must be done to better prepare them."

**18. Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett:** The Democrat won a third term with 60% of the vote, withstanding a \$13 million self-funding onslaught from Republican nominee Jefferson Shreve. Hogsett campaigned on seven consecutive balanced budgets, his plan to repave many neighborhood streets with a \$1.2 billion infrastructure plan, a reduction in the murder rate and investments in public safety. "In good times and in tough times, it has been the residents of our beautiful city who have kept us focused and energized, and that does not stop today," Hogsett said during his victory speech.

**19. Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry:** The Democrat won a record fifth term for the city, defeating Republican Councilman Tom Didier 52-48%. "I was running for an unprecedented fifth term," Henry said on election night. "We knew there were a lot of

voters out there who felt that maybe it was time for a change, but, fortunately, a number of them felt that the momentum that we're currently exhibiting should continue for at least the next four years." Plans for 2024 call for investments in neighborhood infrastructure improvements totaling \$47.6 million when combined with enhancements through the Parks & Recreation Department and a southeast Fort Wayne plan through the Community Development Division.

**20. Evansville Mayor Stephanie Terry:** She became the first female and African American to win the mayor's office in the Pocket City, which had been the birthplace of the Indiana Ku Klux Klan a century ago. "It says Evansville is ready for something different," Terry said on election night



after defeating Republican Natalie Rascher and Libertarian Michael Daugherty by a 9% plurality. "And, again, I hope I am going to serve this

community well. I've invested in this community and serving for the last 12 years, and their vote speaks to the fact that we want somebody who is going to be for all people, and that's what I hope to do," she told WEVV-TV. As for her plans, Mayor Terry said she wants to be transparent, accountable, and accessible. She plans to bring back the "Traveling City Hall" to ensure that she and her city department heads are regularly accessible to residents.

**21. Republican Chairwoman Anne Hathaway:** She becomes the first female to lead the Indiana Republican Party since it was established in the mid-1850s. Gov. Holcomb tabbed the long-time operative to replace Chairman Kyle Hupfer, who continued the party's record dominance—including maintaining General Assembly super majorities for six cycles while holding nine of 11 congressional seats, all of the Statehouse constitutional offices, and 90% of county offices. Hathaway, who has led the Lugar Series of Public Excellence for 15 years, told HPI, "I encourage women every day to take a risk, be willing to lose, go out of their comfort

zones and run for office or serve on a board or commission. I couldn't continue to do that unless I was willing to do that myself."

**22. Micah Beckwith and Comptroller Elise Nieshalla:** If there is any drama at the upcoming June Indiana Republican Convention, it could be over the lieutenant governor nomination. Noblesville Rev. Beckwith is actively campaigning for the slot, and Sen. Braun told HPI that several other candidates may surface. Braun says he is in touch with delegate sentiments and, if nominated, will count on their advice. Beckwith lost a 2020 Republican 5th Congressional District primary, finishing third behind Victoria Spartz with 12.5% of the vote. At least for the first six months of 2024, it will be difficult to ignore Beckwith. GOP insiders tell HPI that another possible candidate is newly-appointed Comptroller Nieshalla, who served on the Boone County Council, most recently as president. Nieshalla came onto the statewide scene in 2022 finishing three votes shy at the GOP Convention to be the nominee for state treasurer. Gov. Holcomb was widely praised across the GOP when he named her as state comptroller to replace Tera Klutz. She will have a platform to travel statewide to talk about GOP successes.

**23. Supreme Court Chief Justice John G. Roberts and Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett:** Chief Justice Roberts grew up in Long Beach and attended high school in LaPorte. Justice Barrett taught at Notre Dame and lived in South Bend. Both will be poised to make the most important decisions related to the American presidency since SCOTUS's 2000 Bush vs. Gore decision determined that race. The high court is expected to rule on a Colorado Supreme Court ruling that bars Donald Trump from the primary ballot due to the Jan. 6 insurrection. It is also expected to rule on Trump's claim that as president, he is immune from any legal consequence. Barrett is one of three Trump appointees to the court. Roberts is expected to seek "consensus" on these decisions, as opposed to a 6-3 partisan ruling that could roil American politics.

**24. RNC National Committeeman John Hammond III:** Count this RNC member as parting with Donald Trump. "To win 50% plus one in the Electoral College requires us to find an alternative and I think we've got plenty of good choices," Hammond told The New York Times in January 2023. "We can't be a cult of personality any longer." Asked on Jan. 9 if he stands by that statement, Hammond told Howey Politics, "Yes, 100%."

**25: Club for Growth President David McIntosh:** The former Indiana congressman and 2000 Republican gubernatorial nominee has been playing kingmaker in Indiana. As president of Club for Growth, McIntosh is backing Sen. Braun for governor and Rep. Banks for the U.S. Senate seat. In 2020, his backing of Victoria Spartz was instrumental in her winning a 13-person primary with 40% of the vote. Since 2020, Club for Growth has spent \$150 million nationally on Republican candidates. There had been a falling out with Donald Trump. Axios reported last week that the Club is reopening lines of communication with the former president.

**26: Democratic Chairman Mike Schmuhl:** Indiana Democrats defended big city mayors in Indianapolis, Fort Wayne and New Albany in 2023, and picked up Terre Haute with Brandon Sakbun, Evansville with Stephanie Terry and Michigan City with Angie Nelson-Deutch. Chairman Schmuhl told Howey Politics at French Lick in August, "I'm very happy to report we've nearly doubled our budget year after year. We had an operating budget of about \$1 million a year and we've doubled that. That's allowed us to hire more people, hire more organizers around the state, make some investments in technology for different tools to reach more voters. I do feel really good about that. It's putting our party on a good track for our future." As for the national dynamic, Schmuhl asks, "Which record is longer? President Biden's legislative record or Trump's felony count?"

**27. Eric Doden and Curtis Hill:** These two candidates are seeking the GOP gubernatorial nomination. Both are widely believed to be in a "second tier" of the race, based on fundraising, name ID and past record. But many GOP observers we've talked with believe there is a nomination path for both candidates in unforeseen scenarios. Doden was the first declared candidate and tapped into his family for early financial



traction, which now seems to have tapered off. Doden told Hamilton County Republicans, "We have an obligation to lead with a servant's heart. That means you have a bold vision for Indiana that improves people's lives. There are 13,000 kids living in foster homes. Adoption, investing in our teachers, investing in our children to invest in our future. Nobles-

ville, Fishers, Carmel are excellent commu-



nities. We need that excellence in all 92 counties, and that's what our Indiana Main Street program is about so that people in small towns and the 2.6 million people who live there have a brighter future." Hill is the former attorney general who lost his law license for 30 days following 2018 sexual harassment allegations. In 2020, he lost renomination at the GOP convention to Todd Rokita due to fallout from that scandal. He ran for the open 2nd Congressional District seat in 2022 following the death of U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski, finishing second to U.S. Rep. Rudy Yakym, 205-86. "I can't imagine 11 years after Sept. 11 we're still talking about the border," Hill said in his stump speech. "As your governor, I won't hesitate to deploy the Indiana National Guard at the border. We have to fight back on the Mexican cartels. Here's what I won't do, which is like the Holcomb-Crouch administration: Sit back and watch Indianapolis burn. I know the difference between constitutional protection and violent offenders. I believe in America and I believe in the culture of life."



**28. U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg:** While he has moved his official residence to Traverse City, Mich., he still has enormous sway with Hoosier Democrats. He is also poised to be a post-Biden presidential candidate, possibly as early as 2028. In 2020, he won the Iowa caucuses and finished a razor-thin second to Sen. Bernie Sanders in New Hampshire before Joe Biden's campaign caught fire in South Carolina and then on Super Tuesday. "Mayor Pete" is expected to be a key advocate for President Biden's reelection in November. "The stakes have only gotten higher," Buttigieg told Democrats at French Lick. "Tens of millions of Americans have health insurance now. A gay man standing before you, as the happily married father of two, would have been unthinkable. The idea we would see people on the west front of the Capitol violently invading to prevent the peaceful transfer of power. We saw on the east front of the Capitol enough veterans demanding benefits that there is such a thing as the right thing. We'll remember that because the stakes couldn't be any higher."

**29. Education Secretary Katie Jenner:** The first governor-appointed education secretary is preparing to take on "social promotion" of third grade students who can't read. "We will absolutely consider, who are the students that may still need a

good cause exemption? That will absolutely be a part of the conversation," Jenner said following the State Board of Education's monthly meeting in December, according to the Indiana Capital Chronicle. "But what will also be a part of the conversation is, what about the other 8,000 students that don't have a good cause exemption? From the longitudinal implications that we see thus far, it's not benefiting them moving forward. I think that's the real answer that, as a state, we have to solution-find —

fast. We're going to have to address that this legislative session — noting that there will be some exceptions for kids — but we also have way too many moving forward right now." According to new data from the Indiana Department of Education, in 2023, 13,840 third-graders did not pass IREAD-3, State Affairs reported. Of those, 5,503 received an exemption and 8,337 did not. Of those without an exemption, 95% moved onto 3rd grade while only 412 were retained.

**30. Gary Mayor Eddie Melton:** The former state senator upset Mayor Jerome Prince in the Democratic primary, then easily won the office in November. "Our collective work will be the evidence to those here in Gary and across the country that Gary is a world-class city. One that can be home to corporate headquarters, innovation centers, tech incubators, fine arts centers, thriving small businesses, nationally ranked schools





and so much more,” Melton said in his inaugural address, according to the NWI Times. According to the Times, Melton committed his incoming administration to improving the city’s finances, providing basic services, fighting illegal dumping, repairing and maintaining streetlights and pursuing a better education system.

**31. U.S. Rep. Erin Houchin:** The former state senator from Salem was elected president of the congressional House class after winning the seat in 2022. She had resigned from the Indiana Senate to run. “I have found Congress, surprisingly, to be a little more cooperative and collaborative than I found the Statehouse to be,” she told Howey Politics in Nashville last August. “I was expecting it to be very dysfunctional and it’s more functional than I thought. We’re passing bills. We’ve passed more than 100 bills out of the House, with 86% bipartisan support, which I think most people don’t hear about.” Last week, she journeyed to the U.S. Mexican border with new House Speaker Mike Johnson. “I traveled back to our border for a second time to shine a light on the crisis that has made every state, including Indiana, a border state,” Houchin said. Asked about the trafficking of fentanyl, Houchin told HPI, “It is a porous border and fentanyl is flooding across. The agents at the ports of entry are overwhelmed, just like the Border Patrol. The cartels will hold 85 to 100 migrants and then push them across the border at the same time; that causes Border Patrol agents to report to that area, and then they see all that cartel activity with their drones and they push their stuff across. I cannot overstate the crisis level at the border.”



**32: Jim Bopp Jr.:** The Terre Haute attorney has been general counsel for the national Right to Life organization. He was also instrumental in winning the Citizens United decision in 2011 that changed congressional campaign finance laws. As social conservatives step up efforts to nationalize abortion restrictions — a departure from previous stances that wanted states to decide — Bopp is expected to play a key role. The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule on the availability of mifepristone, also known as RU-486, after a Texas federal drug ordered the Food & Drug Administration

to withdraw approval of the drug.

**33: Senate Majority Leader Chris Garten:**

Though rumors of an allegedly inevitable run for lieutenant governor have faded, his statewide travel and tireless fundraising for fellow members of the caucus has made Garten a well-respected brand in the Statehouse and out of state. His stump speech talking about a challenging childhood and how his time in the military set him up for success in business and ultimately politics is a powerful one, so we have to believe there is more to come from this new member of leadership who is already becoming a veteran legislator in a short amount of time.

**34: UAW President Shawn Fain:**

The Kokomo native who began his labor career at UAW local 1166 is now in the vortex of the American labor movement. He was elected president of the UAW last March after beginning his career as an electrician at the Chrysler Kokomo Casting Plant. His election was seen as a sea change in the world of automaking. Last fall, Fain won a dramatic showdown with Ford, GM and Stellantis after a six-week strike. “We wholeheartedly believe our strike squeezed every last dime out of General Motors,” Fain said in a video address. “They underestimated us. They underestimated you.” He is now planning to organize UAW locals at Honda, Toyota, Volkswagen and Subaru plants across the Midwest and South. One of the first labor actions of 2024 could come at Allison Transmission in Indianapolis.

**35. Secretary of State Diego Morales:**

The Republican defeated appointed Secretary of State Holli Sullivan at the 2022 Republican convention, then topped Democrat Destiny Wells by 14% that November despite a torrent of bad press. Morales celebrated his November victory telling Republican supporters that “the truth always prevails. Always. My commitment to you is that I will work as hard as I’ve been doing to make all of you proud and take this office, the legacy of all secretaries of state, to the next level.” Since taking office, Morales has paid out large bonuses to staff. Data obtained by the Indiana Capital Chronicle showed that just four of six offices led by elected officials awarded spot bonuses in 2023. But Morales’ spending far outpaces his peers for a total of \$308,000, which includes five \$10,000 bonuses and two \$12,000 bonuses.

**36. State Sen. Kyle Walker:** A member of the state Senate who continues to rise in stature and responsibility, Walker is also on the Indiana Republican Central Committee and is developing a reputation for his no-nonsense approach to public policy issues. His approachability makes him very popular in the hallway and throughout the Statehouse. A strong fundraiser who is well networked, expect Walker to help his colleagues in the House and Senate defend GOP seats in 2024. Sen. Walker is married to GOP super consultant Jen Hallowell, making them the unofficial “power couple” of 2024.

**37. State Rep. Ethan Manning:** While state Sen. Ron Alting may lay claim to remaining “the sheriff” on public policy issues in the General Assembly, it appears evident that a key leader in the future of gaming, alcohol, cannabis, etc. is going to be Manning. An ambitious and respected rising star with lots of runway ahead of him, Manning is growing into his role as House Public Policy Committee chair and will be a key ally to Speaker Huston in future sessions and in deciding the direction of the caucus.

**38. Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen:** Hearing Mayor Jensen speak at his State of the City address in the fall left the 500+ attendees with no doubt that his first term as mayor of Noblesville was an impactful one, especially with recent news about a new stadium for the Pacers G-League team. Full of energy, willing to engage in regional issues, and a strong communicator, Jensen is a mayor who understands local government as well as how the Statehouse works. For this reason and others, Jensen has to be assumed to be on the short list for



lieutenant governor of at least one gubernatorial candidate (he has endorsed Crouch), and would be a strong addition to balance out a campaign more focused on social issues as he brings with him conservative bona fides without the baggage. Another potential lieutenant governor short-lister is fellow Hamilton County mayor Scott Fadness of Fishers.

**39. Carmel Mayor Sue Finkam:** Pulling an upset in a three-way primary — Finkam won with 36% of the vote over Kevin Rider’s 32% and Fred Glynn’s 31% — positions her in a post-Jim Brainard era to capitalize on existing momentum and to raise her profile and that of Carmel on a national level. It’s hard not to argue that Carmel is not one of the most consequential cities statewide, so Finkam will



be intently watched for how she plays in statewide and local politics in addition to bringing a needed dose of pragmatism to the GOP brand.

**40. South Bend Mayor James Mueller:** The first-term mayor defeated Councilman Henry Davis Jr. with 68% in the Democratic primary, then won a second term with 73% in November. Mueller said he wants to focus on the Republican extremist agenda. “This should be a wake up call to the opposing party that we need to get the people in focus on delivering, and no longer focusing on their extremism,” said Mueller on election night. He told WSBT-TV, “Yeah, we’ve got to deliver on the issues. And you mentioned it just now; public safety is a top issue here in the city of South Bend as in many cities across the country, and so we’ve got a focus on the issues that voters care about.”

**41. Hamilton County Republican Chair Mario Massillamany:** As chairman of the most consequential GOP county, Massillamany had a strong 2023, stopping what could have been a few decent opportunities for Democratic pickups in local races and even picking up a seat or two. He will continue to play a significant role in sorting out

how the county organization will play in the governor’s race, a crowded primary to replace Victoria Spartz, holding serve on legislative seats to replace Reps. Donna Schaibley, Chuck Goodrich and Jerry Torr, while also supporting two new mayors in Sue Finkam of Carmel and Scott Willis of Westfield.

**42. U.S. Rep. Frank Mrvan:** The two-term Democrat represents the lone competitive congressional district in the

state. He faces a challenge from Republican Lake County Councilman Randy Niemeyer. According to Open Secrets, Mrvan has raised \$876,000 for the current cycle. In 2022, he defeated Republican Jennifer-Ruth Green 52.8% to 47.2%.

**43. U.S. Rep. Andre Carson:** Rep. Carson called for a cease fire nine days after the Israel/Hamas war began. He then joined the two other Muslims in the House (U.S. Reps. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib) against the growing tide of anti-Muslim hate. “As the three Muslim members of Congress, we are horrified by Rep. Ryan Zinke’s recently introduced bill to pause all visas, refugee status and granting of asylum for individuals holding a passport issued by the Palestinian Authority indefinitely — and to revoke others. Unfortunately, this legislation is part of a growing tide of bigoted anti-Muslim, anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian hate pervading our politics, said Carson. “Let’s be clear: Using the full power of the state to target and persecute a particular ethnic group or nationality is fascism and pure bigotry. We call on the leadership of both parties to vocally and specifically condemn these comments and legislation, to make clear that anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate has no place in our politics, and to name it when it happens.”



**44. Purdue President Mung Chiang and IU President Pamela Whitten:** Following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7, 2023, American campuses have been roiled over free speech and anti-semitic issues, costing the jobs of university presidents at Harvard and Penn State. IU’s Whitten was criticized for her initial response on the issue, recasting her statement. On the home front, the mutual and friendly IUPUI divorce will begin to take shape this coming year with these two Big 10 presidents leading the way.

**45. Mitch Daniels:** The former Purdue president and Indiana governor appeared to slam the door on a political comeback last January after exploring a U.S. Senate bid. “It’s just not the job for me, not the town for me, and not the life I want to live at this point,” Daniels said. He has been approached by No Labels for an independent presidential bid, but told Howey Politics he wasn’t interested. He passed on a presidential run in 2011. While we don’t expect Daniels to run for anything ... ever again ... he is too influential to leave off the Power 50.

**46. Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr.:** He won a record sixth term unopposed in November. His Left of Center podcast begins its 11th year with host Kevin Smith. In 2022 McDermott lost a challenge to U.S. Sen. Todd Young, but he has left his McDermott for Indiana Facebook page open. “I’ve had a pretty busy few years [mayor in 2019, Congress in 2020, Senate in 2022, mayor in 2023],

so I may try and relax and smell the roses a bit. Or, until I get bored and jump back into action. Who knows?”

**47. Ambassador Joe Donnelly:** The former senator is the highest ranking Hoosier in the Biden administration as envoy to the Holy See at the Vatican. Donnelly passed on an opportunity to come back home and run for either his old open Senate seat or the Democratic gubernatorial nomination.

**48. Sen. Travis Holdman and Rep. Jeff Thompson:** They will be influencing the direction of this tax review task force in 2024 that could push for some significant changes come the 2025 budget session. Senate Appropriations Chair Ryan Mishler is also holding some sway over that debate.

**49. Betsy Wiley of Hoosiers for Quality Education:** She, along with former GOP chair Al Hubbard have been on the vanguard of the school choice issue. This past session Hoosiers for Quality Education achieved most of its goals, creating a virtual universal choice education component in the state.

**50. Vanessa Sinderson/Matt Mindrum:** As the new executives for the Indiana Chamber and Greater Indy Chamber, respectively, both leaders have an opportunity to rebuild the brands of their organizations and set forth a vision for the role each organization will play in shaping public policy and supporting candidates in the coming years.



# Indiana congressional exodus continues

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY and TOM DAVIES

INDIANAPOLIS - With the retirement announcements this week from the U.S. Reps. Greg Pence and Larry Bucshon, there has been a virtual Hoosier exodus from Congress heading into the 2024 cycle.



The two Republicans join U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz and Jim Banks in turning the pages on their U.S. House careers. U.S. Sen. Mike Braun is also leaving to run for governor. Banks is the Republican frontrunner for the open U.S. Senate seat. Spartz said a year ago she would not seek a third term, but suggested in late-December she might reconsider.

Pence, the three-term Republican and brother of former vice president Mike Pence, announced on X Tuesday that he will not run for reelection.

“In 2017 I ran for Congress because I was ready to serve again. As a former Maine officer, I approached the job with purpose. After three terms I’ve made the decision not to file for reelection. For the remainder of my term this year, our team will continue to focus on delivering outstanding constituent services. To the voters in Indiana 6th District, it is a privilege and honor to represent you in our nation’s capital,” Rep. Pence wrote on X.

Rep. Pence was with the former vice president and his family during the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection, with the family seen being escorted out of the U.S. Capitol to a secure location just seconds before the rioting mob came through. Later on Jan. 6, Rep. Pence voted to object to certifying the Pennsylvania Electoral College votes for Joe Biden.

On Monday, Bucshon announced he won’t seek an eighth term. “Scripture teaches us, ‘For everything there is a season,’ and it became clear to me over the Christmas holiday with much discernment and prayer that the time has come to bring my season in public service to a conclusion,” said Bucshon, who reported \$630,863 cash on hand in October. “Therefore, I will not seek reelection to an eighth term and conclude my service in the House of Representatives at the end of the 118th Congress.”

Democrat Kellie Ann Moore has filed to run in the Democratic primary for the U.S. House of Representative representing the 8th Congressional District.

While Spartz was highly critical of dysfunction in the House, Bucshon said he maintains faith in Congress. “For over 230 years, men and women have chosen to serve our nation in the Congress — in many cases through very trying times in our history — and I’m honored to be included among their ranks,” the heart surgeon announced on his

website. “Recent disputes in Congress and difficulties advancing policy on behalf of the American people have not soured my faith in our Constitutional Republic form of government. In fact, it has strengthened that faith.

“Throughout the history of the United States, one of our strengths has always been the ability of our elected leaders —and the American people —to debate the issues in a public forum, and then ultimately find common ground and compromise on solutions that benefit the American people,” Bucshon said. “It is still true today and this principle always prevails.”

According to 8th Congressional District informed and reliable sources, state Sens. Mark Messmer of Jasper and Greg Goode of Terre Haute are weighing candidacies, along with former state Sen. Jon Ford, also of Terre Haute. Goode replaced Ford when he resigned in late-2023. Others reaching out to potential supporters include state Reps. Tim O’Brien of Evansville and Cindy Ledbetter of Newburgh.

In Pence’s 6th Congressional District, the incumbent posted \$429,794 cash on hand in October. Republican Erik Benson has also filed, but has not posted any funds. The 2022 Democrat nominee Cynthia Wirth has also filed. State Rep. Mike Speedy announced he would seek the seat being vacated by Rep. Pence.

All eyes will be on U.S. Rep. Jim Baird, who was rumored to be considering retirement. He released a statement in October, saying he will seek another term. “Now more than ever we need capable conservatives to fight the far left extremists who want to take our nation down a path of fiscal ruin and moral depravity,” Baird said in a statement.

HPI reached out to Baird’s Washington office



on Tuesday to confirm that he still intends to run, with no response.

Baird faces a primary challenge from Charles Bookwalter, who announced on Monday that he had been endorsed by former national security advisor Michael T. Flynn. Bookwalter had raised \$129,000 and had \$93,785, compared to \$342,360 for Baird.

State Rep. Craig Haggard has said he will seek the 4th Congressional District seat if Baird decides to retire, telling the Capital Chronicle, “The best way for me to put it is: I’m going to run for the 4th Congressional District, period — when it’s ready to go — whether that’s in a month or two, whether that’s Feb. 9, or after this next term. I’m running!”

Filing for state and federal offices with the Indiana Election Division begins on Wednesday and ends at noon Feb. 9.

In the Banks open 3rd Congressional District seat, Republican candidates include Tim Smith, Wendy Davis, state Sen. Andy Zay, Marlin Stutzman, Grant Bucher, Jon Kenworthy and Eric Whalen. Of that group, Smith has posted \$605,344 in contributions with the Federal Election Commission; Davis, \$548,347; Zay, \$461,268; and Stutzman, \$441,164. The rest of the field has posted less than \$50,000.

Democrats Phil Goss (\$161,901) and Dr. Kiley Adolph (\$11,225) have filed for the 3rd Congressional District.

In the open 5th Congressional District, state Rep. Chuck Goodrich posted \$1.53 million in October and had \$993,541 cash on hand, while Siddharth Mahant posted \$1.106 million and had \$982,012 cash on hand. Goodrich has been running cable and broadcast TV ads. Both Goodrich and Mahant have loaned their campaigns \$1 million. Other Republicans filing include Raju Chinthala, Mark Hurt, Lonnie Dale Powell, Max Engling and Scott Goad.

In the 1st Congressional District, the lone competitive Indiana seat left in the House, Democrat U.S. Rep. Frank J. Mrvan posted \$586,674 in October. Mrvan defeated Republican Jennifer-Ruth Green 52.8% to 47.2% in 2022. Rep. Mrvan will be challenged by Lake County Councilman Randy Niemeyer. Other Republicans to file include Martin Lucas and David Ruiz. Tiffany Ford has filed as an independent.

## Legislator migration to Congress continues

The announcement by Rep. Pence on Tuesday that he would not seek reelection in 2024 led to Republican state Rep. Mike Speedy of Indianapolis putting out a statement within hours declaring his congressional candidacy.

Speedy becomes the seventh Republican Indiana House member to say they will leave the Legislature, either through retirement or seeking another office.

Several more current legislators are among those regarded as potential candidates for the congressional seats now held by Pence and fellow Republican Rep. Larry Buschon, who said Monday that he wouldn’t seek an eighth term.

Those decisions will have to come quickly as the candidate filing period opened Wednesday for the May primary ballot and will close on Feb. 9.

State Rep. Chuck Goodrich of Noblesville began his campaign months ago for the seat now held by U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz after she said last year she wouldn’t seek a new term.

State Rep. Matt Hostettler’s father, John Hostettler, was the congressman for 12 years from the 8th District now represented by Buschon until his 2006 reelection defeat.

Matt Hostettler said he didn’t have any early notice about Buschon’s retirement decision, so “was at least two or three hours behind everybody” and “caught flat footed.” Hostettler told State Affairs he was uncertain about making a congressional bid.

“I think every kid is interested in what his dad did, whether he’s a truck driver or politician or a steelworker,” Hostettler said.

Speedy, who has represented a southside Indianapolis district since 2010, had a congressional candidate website up and running within the first day after Pence’s retirement announcement.

“Our nation is at a crossroads,” Speedy said in a news release. “We can choose the path of reconciling America to our founding principles, or we can take the tragic path toward destruction by continuing down the road of Marxism that doomed so many in the 20th century.”

Other Republican House members who have said they won’t seek reelection this year are: Bob Cherry, Randy Lyness, Jerry Torr, Donna Schaibley and Denny Zent. Democratic Rep. Ryan Hatfield of Evansville is running for a Vanderburgh County

judge position. Republican Sen. John Crane is the only Senate member to announce a decision to not seek reelection.

## Slew of suburban Indy, southern Democrats file

Indiana Democrats announced a slate of suburban and rural area General Assembly candidates on Tuesday. The party pledged to support Hollie Payton, Trish Whitcomb, Thomas Horrocks, Jason Applegate, and Alex Burton in their races for the Indiana House of Representatives.

Democratic candidates across the Indianapolis suburbs filed their bids to run for the Indiana House of Representatives in 2024. These include candidates in Hamilton, Hendricks, Boone, and Hancock counties. Military veterans Matt McNally, Robert Pope, and Nate Anderson are running in HD39, HD40, and HD53, while community advocates Josh Lowry and Tiffany Stoner are running in districts HD24 and HD25.

“This year, we have a robust, incredibly qualified slate of candidates running across the Indy suburbs,” said Indiana Democratic Party Chair Mike Schmuhl. “Each of our candidates have served their communities in various roles, and are ready to take the fight for working families and small businesses to the statehouse. The voters in the Indianapolis suburbs have the power to break the Republican supermajority, and restore common sense leadership that will defend our schools, fund our hospitals, and make the American dream achievable for all Hoosiers.

“Hollie, Trish, Thomas, Jason, and Alex have a passion for public service and understand the importance of creating a brighter future for all of Indiana. We are excited to witness their leadership as candidates and future members of the House of Representatives.”

The Indiana Democratic Party fully endorses these candidates running for the Indiana General Assembly in 2024:

### HD73: Payton to challenge Rep. Meltzer

Democrat Hollie Payton is challenging Rep. Jennifer Meltzer. Payton is a lifelong Hoosier who resides in Decatur County. Hollie has been employed as a Program Facilitator at Girls Inc of Shelbyville & Shelby County for the past five years. Payton has been a fierce advocate for her health care rights. Payton is running to create progress & action, and to be a voice for all. She can be found online at [www.facebook.com/holliepaytonforIN](http://www.facebook.com/holliepaytonforIN).

Meltzer is an attorney representing the city of Shelbyville, and previously served as deputy attorney general with the Indiana Attorney General’s Office, and worked for the Indiana Department of Health. She received her Juris Doctorate from the Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law. In 2022, Meltzer defeated Democrat Mary Pruett 77.1% to 22.9%.

### HD69: Whitcomb challenges Rep. Lucas

Trish Whitcomb is a longtime Democrat and a Hoosier since age 5 who is running to be a voice for the people in HD69. She is challenging Republican Rep. Jim Lucas. Whitcomb has long worked in Indiana politics and was a previous president of the Indiana Federation of Democratic Women. She is also a former executive director of the Indiana Retired Teachers Association. She is the daughter of Republican Gov. Edgar D. Whitcomb. More details about her can be found online at [www.whitcomb4indiana.com](http://www.whitcomb4indiana.com). “Trish Whitcomb has been active in community activism throughout her career and will bring the value of progress to the table as a state legislator. She cares deeply about Hoosiers and will bring the same commitment to public service her father did when he was Indiana governor – by working across party lines for everyone,” said Schmuhl. In 2022, Lucas defeated Democrat Chad Harmon 73.7% to 26.3%.

### HD62: Horrocks vs. Rep. Hall

Democrat Thomas Horrocks is a church pastor and chaplain in the Indiana Army National Guard, where he has served for nearly 10 years. He has completed one overseas deployment and more than a year on full-time orders where he served in Indiana during the COVID response mission. Horrocks is a first-time candidate who is running because he believes the current super-majority government should focus more on actually helping Hoosiers. He can be found online at [www.horrocksforhoosiers.com](http://www.horrocksforhoosiers.com). Rep. Hall is a member of the Jackson County REMC Board of Directors and serves as a special deputy with the Jackson County Sheriff’s Department. He is a past president of the Jackson County Council, and has served on the Jackson County Redevelopment Commission and Jackson County Industrial Development



Corporation. He has also served on the Owen Township Advisory Board, Emergency Management Board and Ambulance Board. In 2022, Hall defeated Democrat Penny Githens 50.1% to 49.9%.

## **HD72: Applegate vs. Rep. Clere**

Democrat Jason Applegate is a small business owner and community leader who is challenging Republican Rep. Ed Clere. He is the founder of Extol Media and member of the New Albany City Council. He cares deeply about the state of education in Indiana and also wants to prioritize giving small businesses the tools they need for success. Applegate is passionate about serving his community and looks forward to having an even greater impact as an important voice for southern Indiana at the state house. He can be found online at [www.applegateforoffice.com](http://www.applegateforoffice.com). Clere was narrowly defeated in the New Albany mayoral race last November by incumbent Jeff Gahan. He serves on the House Ways and Means, Education and Public Policy committees. He is a legislative appointee to the board of Indiana's CHOICE program, a state-funded program that helps seniors and people with disabilities stay in their home and avoid institutional care. He is also a legislative appointee to the boards of the Indiana School for the Deaf and the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites Corporation, and to the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission. In 2022, Clere defeated Democrat Keil Roark 60.4% to 39.6%.

## **HD77: Burton seeks open seat**

Democrat Councilman Alex Burton was born and raised in Evansville and is a graduate of Bosse High School where he played basketball and football. The seat is currently held Democrat Rep. Ryan Hatfield, who announced his candidacy for Vanderburgh County judge. Burton attended Indiana State University and became active with student government. He formerly interned with Mayor Weinzapfel and before starting a Western Kentucky University where he taught, advised, and interned for two members of Congress. After moving back to Evansville, he ran for City Council, at –Large for the first time in 2015, and ran again in 2019 for the Ward 4 council seat and won. Since then, Burton has been at the forefront of several initiatives that relate to workforce development, youth, and economic development. He can be found online at [www.ab4evv.com](http://www.ab4evv.com). In 2022, Hatfield defeated Libertarian Jada Burton 76.7% to 23.3%.

Democrats running in suburban Indianapolis districts include:

## **HD39: McNally running a second time**

McNally is a military veteran, airline pilot and union member. He is seeking the seat of retiring Republican Rep. Jerry Torr. Republican Danny Lopez has declared for the seat. McNally served for more than 22 years including in the Navy Reserves in Indiana and the Air National Guard. Matt currently serves the Carmel and Westfield communities as the Senior Vice Commander of VFW Post 10003, on the board of the Westfield Kiwanis Club, and as an English as a second language instructor with Exodus Refugee. He and his wife Brooke have two kids, both of whom attended public schools. McNally first ran in 2022, where his campaign connected with more than 30,000 voters on their doorsteps. Matt is running because after talking to so many members of his

community, he knows the policies pushed by the current super-majority are out of step with Hoosiers in the 39th District. McNally can be found online at [www.mcnallyforindiana.com](http://www.mcnallyforindiana.com). In 2022, Torr defeated McNally 52.4% to 47.6%.

## **HD24: Lowry seeks open seat**

Democrat Josh Lowery is a trial lawyer, foster parent, and native Hoosier from Martinsville. He is seeking the open seat of retiring Republican Rep. Donna Schaibley. Lowery attended IU Bloomington and spent five years as a Deputy Attorney General practicing constitutional law, where he defended state agencies such as the Department of Child Services and Indiana State Police. He has argued in front of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals and conducted jury trials. He and his wife, Alexis, have spent years fostering youth and now have 5 adopted children. Lowery ran unsuccessfully for State Senate in 2022 and is now running for HD 24 because his years fostering and adopting have shown him the impact we can have on the community when we decide to take action instead of just hoping things will get better. He can be found online at [www.lowryforindiana.com](http://www.lowryforindiana.com). In 2022, . Schaibley defeated Democrat Joey Mayer 56.6% to 40.8%. In SD21 in 2022, Sen. Jim Buck defeated Lowery 64% to 36%.

## **HD40: Pope to challenge Steuerwald**

Democrat Robert Pope is an Iraq Army veteran, a native Hoosier and a senior software engineer subcontractor for the Department of Veterans Affairs. He is challenging Republican Rep. Greg Steuerwald. Pope is a current town councilor of the City of Avon and a past town council president. As town council president for Avon, Pope was responsible for policy changes focused on expanding the local economy, reducing government inefficiency, and improving public safety. Robert helped bring more than \$1 billion in

new business development to the town during his tenure. However, Pope has noticed a disconnect between local and state government that ultimately does serve Hoosiers. He is running because he is committed to better government in Indiana that serves the interests of all citizens. Pope can be found online at [www.pope4indiana.com](http://www.pope4indiana.com). Steuerwald is a certified probation officer with the State of Indiana Department of Corrections. He is also a registered mediator and received a Certificate of Recognition in Family Mediation Training through the Indiana Continuing Legal Education Forum. Steuerwald has focused on implementing laws to keep Hoosiers safe. He authored the law providing the foundation for a revision of Indiana's criminal code, which had not been revised in over 30 years. The new code provides for certainty in sentencing and keeps the most violent offenders in prison longer. He also worked to tighten loopholes in the state's sex registry to ensure offenders report any changes in address or appearance to the local authorities. In 2022, Steuerwald ran unopposed.

## **HD25: Stoney challenging Rep. Cash**

Democrat Tiffany Stoney of Zionsville is a Senior Manager at Accenture, one of the largest global consulting firms. She is challenging freshman Republican Rep. Becky Cash. Stoney is also an entrepreneur who founded an international award-winning photography business with her brother in 2001. She has long been giving back to the Hoosier state. She has fundraised more than \$250,000 for several charities including Habitat for Humanity Women's Build, Our Military Kids, Wish Upon A Wedding, Moms Demand Action and Gleaners Food Bank. She can be found online at [www.tiffanystoner.com](http://www.tiffanystoner.com). Cash and her husband, Chris, run a nutrition business, and she is a naturopathic practitioner. She has also spent more than 15 years helping parents navigate services for children with special needs, explore educational options and help them know their rights. In 2022, Cash defeated Democrat Jen Bass-Patino 52.8% to 47.3%.

## **HD53: Anderson seeks open seat**

Democrat Nate Anderson is a combat veteran with nearly two decades of service as a senior enlisted soldier in the Indiana Army National Guard and a law enforcement officer with a decade of experience, currently serving as a school resource officer for Franklin TWP Community Schools Corporation. He is seeking the seat of retiring Republican Rep. Bob Cherry. Anderson has a long professional history of expertise in operations, planning, and leadership. Anderson decided to run for House District 53 to be a voice and advocate for working-class families. Anderson can be found online at [www.nate4mayor.com](http://www.nate4mayor.com). In 2022, Cherry ran unopposed.

## **HD29: Republican Shonkwiler declares**

Noblesville Republican Alaina Shonkwiler declares her candidacy HD29. The announcement follows the decision of current State Rep. Chuck Goodrich to vacate the position. "As I seek your vote to be our next State Representative, I will be the passionate conservative fighter we need," she declared.

## **HD51: Dr. Sharp, Isa seeking Zent seat**

Local family medicine specialist Dr. Rhonda Sharp and Tony Isa have filed for HD52, the seat being vacated by Dr. Denny Zent. "Over 20 years ago, I became a physician, and

running for office was nowhere on the horizon," said Sharp, "But as I have continued in my career, it has become more and more obvious that there are many forces at work on the health - the physical, mental and economic health - of our patients, our physicians, and our communities. These forces are detrimental to many of our Hoosier values. I believe we need strong, Christian, conservative leadership willing to fight for our values and all Northeast Indiana, and I look forward to being that person and to earning the trust of residents in LaGrange and Steuben Counties."

### **Governor**

## **Braun submits 14,000 ballot signatures**

U.S. Sen. Mike Braun's gubernatorial campaign announced Wednesday it had submitted over 14,500 signatures for verification from all 92 counties, which is triple the number of signatures necessary to qualify for the gubernatorial ballot. Braun recently announced that he raised the most total money in the race from the largest number of individual donors and currently leads the field with over \$4 million cash on hand. "I am incredibly thankful to set a Hoosier record for signatures submitted, with 14,500 signatures, which is more than triple the required signatures to run for Governor," said Braun in a statement. "From our strong grassroots team, who secured signatures in all 92 counties, to the robust fundraising operation, along with the endorsement of former President Donald Trump, it's clear that we are building something special that will result in conservative policies that will improve the lives of Hoosiers."

# Tallying retirements after Pence, Buchson

BY KYLE KONDIK

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. - Four more House retirements over the past several days pushed the number of incumbents running this year down to the post-World War II average, and there is of course more time for other House incumbents to retire.

Four Republicans—Reps. Doug Lamborn (R, CO-5), Greg Pence (R, IN-6), Larry Bucshon (R, IN-8), and Blaine Luetkemeyer (R, MO-3)—joined the growing number of House members heading for the exits recently. Their retirement announcements mean that, as of now, 22 Democratic House members and 16 Republicans are not running for reelection, according to the House of Representatives Press Gallery.

That leaves, at maximum, 397 House incumbents running for another term this year—that assumes no more House retirements (which is not a safe assumption) and that the new members eventually elected in special elections to a few remaining vacant seats decide to run for reelection to full terms.

According to Vital Statistics on Congress as well as our own calculations, an average of 397 incumbents have run for reelection to the House each two-year cycle since 1946—the same number of incumbents who appear to be running again at the moment. The number of incumbents running again may be slightly different than the number of open seats, as sometimes two members will run against each other in the same district because of redistricting. There's at least one such instance this cycle, as a court-imposed new map in Alabama pushed Republican Reps. Jerry Carl and Barry Moore to run against one another in AL-1, leaving the redrawn AL-2 as an open seat (and Likely Democratic pickup) thanks to the new lines. It is possible that looming new maps in Louisiana and New York could create similar situations—or lead to additional retirements.

That a little under 400 House members on average seek reelection each cycle in a 435-member chamber just underscores the reality that despite high incumbent reelection rates, there actually is a fair amount of turnover in the House from each cycle. Another statistic that shows this trend is that following Bucshon's retirement, at most just 10 of the 66 Republicans who flipped Democratic-held districts in the GOP's 2010 wave will be in the House come 2025.

Bucshon, one of the recent retirees, represents the so-called “Bloody 8th,” a one-time competitive district in southwest Indiana that has become a Republican bastion as Democrats have lost ground among the working-class white voters who dominate that district. The district was home to a high-profile controversy in the 1984 election, in which the Democratic-controlled House eventually determined Democratic incumbent Frank McCloskey won by just four votes, effectively overruling state authorities to howls of protest

from Republicans who believed that Democrats stole the seat (for more on the 1984 race and its lingering repercussions, see this great piece from Politico Magazine's Michael Kruse). The current IN-8 gave nearly two-thirds of its votes to Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election and remains Safe Republican in our ratings.

Trump won 62% of the vote in the retiring Blaine Luetkemeyer's MO-3, which extends from central Missouri to the St. Louis exurbs, and he got 65% in the retiring Greg Pence's IN-6, which contains a southern



chunk of Democratic Indianapolis

Marion County and extends east to the Ohio border, taking in many red counties along the way. These districts are also much too Republican to elect Democrats. Pence, the brother of former Vice President Mike Pence (R), is the fourth Indiana Republican not seeking reelection to the House this year: In addition to Pence and Bucshon, Rep. Jim Banks (R, IN-3) is running for Senate and Rep. Victoria Spartz (R, IN-5) is retiring, although she has sometimes waffled on that decision.

Alone among the four newly-open Republican seats, the district held by Doug Lamborn, CO-5, does merit a bit of a look as a district that could potentially be competitive in a general election. We're actually going to move it from Safe Republican to Likely Republican in our ratings, even though Democrats would need to have a whole lot to go right to seriously contest it.

Colorado Springs, described by the Almanac of American Politics as “one of America's most Republican metropolitan areas,” makes up the core of CO-5, which has consistently elected Republican House members since its creation after the 1970 census. The fast-growing city and surrounding areas are home to the Air Force Academy and otherwise features a huge military presence. Lamborn had some primary trouble over the years, but was always renominated since replacing the retiring Joel Hefley in 2006 (Lamborn beat Hefley's preferred successor, outflanking the former Hefley aide to the right). The growth of Colorado Spring's El Paso County, in addition to an added House seat in Colorado, meant that CO-5 could be drawn to just cover almost all of El Paso County, dropping a few rural counties that had previously been in the district.

As recently as 2016, Donald Trump was winning CO-5 56%-34%, but that margin dipped to 53%-43% in 2020. Trump's 11-point margin in El Paso County was the smallest GOP margin of victory there since Barry Goldwater lost the county in 1964.



# Thoughts and prayers for Wayne LaPierre

BY JACK COLWELL



**SOUTH BEND, Ind.** — The least we can do is offer our thoughts and prayers to Wayne LaPierre, the corruption trial defendant who resigned under fire - although not as-sault-rifle fire - as leader of the National Rifle Association.

The least is what LaPierre always did after all those mass shootings. He offered only thoughts and prayers as a substitute for doing anything to reduce gun violence.

Just last spring, LaPierre was honored in the Indiana Senate with a resolution praising his more than three decades of NRA leadership. He was in Indianapolis for the NRA annual meeting, featuring acres of guns and gear from manufacturers and retailers and appearances by former President Donald Trump and former Vice President Mike Pence - not appearing together, of course.

Even then, as he was honored in a legislature that had done away with requirements for gun permits, LaPierre's days of leadership were numbered.

Other NRA officials were maneuvering to oust him, with membership declining sharply, revenue dropping, talk of bankruptcy, programs slashed and embarrassing disclosures of LaPierre using association money for a lavish lifestyle at home and abroad, including African safaris, millions of dollars for private jets and eight trips to the Bahamas over a three-year span.

LaPierre defended his cruising in the Bahamas on a vendor's luxury yacht as a security measure necessitated by threats he received after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in Connecticut and the Florida high school shootings in Parkland. Well, he has a point. He was safe out there on the waters from the bullets flying around in so many American cities.

In fact, if the parents of those little kids gunned down at Sandy Hook had cared enough to take the families out on luxury yachts, their children would have been safe. Instead, they sent them to school.

Same in Parkland. Why weren't the victims, those high schoolers, out cruising in the Bahamas instead of facing the danger of going to school?

The Parkland shootings apparently did hurt LaPierre. March for Our Lives, formed after those shootings, sent a letter to New York's attorney general asking for an investigation of the reports of misconduct and corruption involving NRA officials. That was a factor in bringing the civil court case in which LaPierre and some other NRA defendants face the possibility of large financial judgments for any ill-gotten wealth and a ban on holding NRA positions.

LaPierre beat a ban by beating a hasty retreat to retirement. Another defendant reached a \$100,000 settlement, agreeing to admit misuse of funds.

March for Our Lives, whose young Parkland survivors were ridiculed by LaPierre devotees as trouble-making brats too stupid to understand the Second Amendment, issued a statement about LaPierre's resignation and how the NRA once was regarded as "an untouchable and seemingly all-powerful political juggernaut."

Untouchable?

"All that it took was some meddling kids and a whole lot of determination to take down one of the largest and most powerful lobbying machines in American history," March for Our Lives said.

Gun owners, the law-abiding kind, played a role in LaPierre's downfall, too. Many dropped NRA membership, unwilling to support the organization's efforts to assure the easy access to guns, including military-style weapons, for the law un-abiding, those in gangs, those in terror groups, those who shoot up schools.

Membership reportedly dropped from nearly 6 million to 4.2 million, with revenue down 44% from 2016.

The organization, founded in 1871 and with a proud past reputation for promoting responsible gun ownership, was becoming viewed as defending irresponsible gun use. LaPierre was viewed by other NRA officials with whom he battled for control as more interested in protecting his lifestyle than in protecting legitimate gun rights.

As Wayne LaPierre departs, we should offer our thoughts and prayers: Thoughts about all he has done. And prayers for victims of gun violence who couldn't escape to the Bahamas.



## Christie bugs out; no endorsement

**WINDHAM, N.H.** — Chris Christie ended his longshot presidential campaign Wednesday in what could be a major boost to Nikki Haley's chances in New Hampshire, even as he pointedly declined to push the anti-Donald Trump movement toward her (**Politico**). In fact, Christie was caught trashing Haley on a hot microphone minutes before suspending his campaign. But Christie's abrupt exit less than a week before Iowa's leadoff caucuses and less than two weeks until New Hampshire's primary undoubtedly will help Haley in the Granite State, where she has surged into a clear second place in polls — and where Christie had threatened to divide the anti-Trump vote. Christie did not endorse any candidate on Wednesday. And Haley has not reached out to Christie in recent weeks, according to a person familiar with their communication — or lack thereof. But she issued a statement Wednesday evening calling Christie a “friend for many years” and pledging to “fight to earn every vote.” “I would rather lose by telling the truth than lie in order to win,” Christie said. “It’s clear to me tonight that there isn’t a path for me to win the nomination, which is why I’m suspending my campaign.”

## More allegations against Noel

**CLARKSVILLE** — A search warrant conducted in late December led to the discovery of some new information pertaining to the criminal investigation of former Clark County Sheriff Jamey Noel (Harp, **News & Tribune**). In a probable cause affidavit released Monday, Indiana State Police investigators searched the home of former Clark County Council member Brittney Ferree in Sellersburg, along with seizing property and information. The investigation states that ISP were told that Noel, who is currently charged with 15 fel-

onies including theft, public corruption and ghost employment, gave a white 2015 BMW, owned by the Utica Township Volunteer Fire Fighter Association, to Ferree. Noel is the chief of the Utica Township Fire Department. Noel had fathered a child with Ferree and was eventually ordered to pay child support as a result of a paternity case. ISP then requested around 154 pages of child support documents from the Indiana Child Support Bureau for Noel's child support payments and had found that “many” of the payments were made using Utica Township Volunteer Fire Fighter Association funds. The documents state that from 2019 to 2023, Noel's payroll indicated that he did not claim support payments on his payroll or taxes, which is required, and that the annual payment was up to around \$25,000. The investigation then led to them trying to verify that Kasey Noel, Noel's daughter, gave \$500 to Ferree's election campaign for Clark County Council 3rd District. However, it also states Jamey Noel had access to his daughter's bank account. BMV records show that Ferree purchased the BMW, which was owned at the time by the firefighter association, on Jan. 23, 2023, for \$21,000 from Jamey Noel. Noel's various companies but could not find the \$21,000 check. It states that this is an attempt at “layering,” which is defined in the investigation as an attempt to make the “process of tracking money or assets through each layer of a business ... more difficult.”

## Indiana pedestrian fatalities high

**KOKOMO** - Two weeks earlier, Walter Powell, 57, Brookville, was attempting to cross Indiana 1 in southern Indiana when he was hit by a truck. He later died at a Cincinnati Hospital. A 27-year-old man was declared dead in May in Anderson after a driver struck him at the intersection of Indiana 9 and Rainbow Boulevard, a small road through a residential area. The three fatalities all share a common theme. Each accident happened at night. Those deaths are just the tip of the

iceberg (Gerber, **CNN**). Since the 1980s, the number of pedestrian deaths has substantially decreased across Indiana and the U.S. Around 2010, that trend inexplicably reversed. Since then, the number of pedestrian fatalities has steadily climbed. The increase has come almost exclusively from pedestrian deaths at night. Indiana hit a near historic peak in 2018, when more than 125 Hoosier pedestrians were killed. Nearly 100 of those deaths happened in the dark, according to federal crash data.

## Bailey interim IMPD chief

**INDIANAPOLIS** - Mayor Joe Hogett has named an acting chief for the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (**WRTV**). Christopher Bailey, currently is the Assistant Chief of Police after serving 25 years in IMPD, will step into the role as acting chief.

## Republicans in an economic funk

**WASHINGTON** - Republicans, rural Americans, renters, women and single people feel like they're in a big fat funk financially, according to the debut installment of the new **Axios Vibes** survey, conducted with The Harris Poll. It's not what voters see — the economy's improving, with rising wages and low unemployment. It's how they feel that could tank President Biden in November. The big number: 76% of respondents agreed with this statement: “Economists may say things are getting better, but we're not feeling it where I live.” 88% of respondents agree with this statement: “Gas, groceries and housing costs — not stocks — are the real economic indicators I care about.” 37% of Americans rate their financial situation as poor. That climbs to 42% for Republicans, 43% for women, 46% for people living in rural areas, 47% for singles and 57% for renters. The online poll included 2,120 U.S. adults, with a margin of error of ±2.8 points.