

INDIANAPOLIS

Review

Spring 2020



WHAT HAPPENED
TO ELIZABETH WARREN?
Schansberg, pp. 11-17

So, You Wanted to Be the Mayor?

“Tax revenue, TIF funds, sanitary district and utility fees are not your money. Residents were forced to give up a portion of their wealth to live in the city you both call home. Spend it as the limited supply it is, and with long-term goals in mind.”

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes: and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.”



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A FUTURE THAT WORKS

Our mission is to marshal the best thought on governmental, economic and educational issues at the state and municipal levels. We seek to accomplish this in ways that:

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- ▶ Emphasize the primacy of the individual in addressing public concerns.
- ▶ Recognize that equality of opportunity is sacrificed in pursuit of equality of results.

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Wednesday Whist

Indiana's Nascent Political Machines

(Dec. 15) — How much is a mayorship worth these days? Not sure? Well, to give you an idea, this last election cycle someone spent an estimated \$100,000 to win just a single district council election.

That was so even though the incumbent was already heavily outvoted at the council table. They just want too shut him up.

Yes, that's a state record. The mayor's office went for \$2.5 million, not even close to a record for that office.*

Clearly, it is important to someone to keep out officials who will be asking questions and raising issues. Someone's special interest is so untenable it cannot bear even the isolated, outvoted attention of a single councilman. And just as obviously, that special interest represents a large amount of money — enough to attract bad company, it is argued here.

Prima facie, folks, this is corruption, perhaps not personal corruption but surely institutional corruption. This particular city council was being used to capture what economists call “rents,” money made by manipulating the political environment rather than by creating new wealth. It is the fancy second cousin to skimming from the cash register, fixing contracts, arranging kickbacks, etc.

Will there be other examples around the state? You betcha. The role of municipal government has been distorted in a way that makes it inevitable.

The regional economic-development policies continued by Gov. Eric Holcomb have turned mayors and city councilmen into investment bankers, picking winners and losers and arranging all manner of loan and bond guarantee as well as preferential tax treatment.

And they aren't good at it, particularly in regard to assessing the degree of risk to future taxpayers or the actual “investment” of those playing the system. It's why the Indiana Policy Review Foundation has launched its “Footholds” project. (Check it out at www.inpolicy.org; we need your help.)

Granted, it is possible that some of that money comes from economic innocents, both big and small donors, who are pulled in with an appeal to city pride — “We've got to save the downtown, the old mill, the iconic factory, the river walk, etc.”

The return in these cases, the payoff, is a sense of civic contribution, however shallow the understanding of the financial arrangements being made by the insiders.

Whatever, the typical municipal office-holder, the kind who likes to hear himself called “mayor” or “councilman,” won't be casting any votes that come with high-dollar campaign challenges. Nor will he be saying “no” to the wrong people.

This, please know, is how political machines are built and maintained. And an inattentive public official, however pure in civic intent, by commission or omission, is the stooge, the menace to a city's future.

So it isn't just the crooks. You have to vote out the dumbkoffs if you want honest local government and representative elections. — *tcl*

* Municipal election summary, Fort Wayne, 2019

Office	Republican				Democrat				Total		Challenger / Incumbent	
	Primary Challenge		Primary Challenge		Primary Challenge		Primary Challenge		Total		Ratio	Challenge \$
Mayor	Smith	1,399,873			Henry	1,219,000	Burgess	2,739	2,621,612		1.15	1,399,873
Clerk	Keesling	35,307			Zuber	10,086			45,393		0.29	10,086
City Council 1	Ensley	10,370			Meehan	5,716			16,086			
City Council 2	Jehl	19,714							19,714			
City Council 3	Didier	21,191	Thomas	4,320	Henry	8,359			33,870		0.60	12,679
City Council 4	Arp	30,876	Lott	23,500	Hays	69,183			123,559		3.00	92,683
City Council 5	Vanover	22,076			Paddock	26,863			48,939		0.82	22,076
City Council 6					Tucker	25,580			25,580			
City Council AL	Baranda	18,800	Townsend	8,745	Hines	25,150			52,695			
City Council AL	Hartman	48,716	Tippman	-	Corona	9,474			58,190			
City Council AL	Friestroffer	32,947			Chambers	25,121			58,068			
Avg CC AL		33,488		4,373		19,915			57,775		0.73	24,288
Total		1,639,870		36,565		1,424,532		2,739	3,103,706			

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So, You Wanted to Be the Mayor?

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(Feb. 20) — As we step into 2020 we often think about what the year will bring. Often we decide to set a goal. I would not be so bold as to suggest that every mayor should. After all, who wants to stress about something inflicted upon oneself for a whole year?

But as I told my now-adult children, as a mayor you may not meet your goal but you will be farther along the path you desire than if you did not have one.

Collectively we make goals. Every four years in Indiana, citizens across the state take the time in November to consider what accomplishments they want for their community. Those citizens placed their confidence in you, their mayor, whom they believed would best meet those goals.

More often than not, the voter believes a change in party affiliation is the key. This past November's election found 19 Indiana

communities voting in favor of the "other" party to represent them in their mayor's office.

I suggest, however, it's not the change of party that will help voters attain their community goals. Adherence to the following list of principles and best practices will get the voters what they seek. For often what voters say they want and what they actually want are two different things . . . but that is a topic for another day.

My suggestions, or goals, if you are up to the challenge, are based on my experience. I was fortunate to serve as mayor of Muncie, the seventh largest city in Indiana. I often said that as an elected official I made 50 percent of the people happy 50 percent of the time. Translated, that means you are likely to make one out of four in your city happy all the time.

That being said, review the list below as you will. You decide. Commit to all, commit to some, or discard the list entirely. Just remember it is an honor to serve as mayor of your community.

1. *"I Solemnly Swear"* — As the newly elected mayor, you raised your right hand and likely swore on a family Bible (this is the Midwest, after all). It was a ceremonial event, one verifying to the public that you are formally taking office, an opportunity for your friends, family and any interested citizen to celebrate the political victory. What is legally required is that you sign an oath of office to be filed with the county clerk in the county in which your city resides. That oath, which is State Form 49157, per the Indiana Election Commission, states:

"I, the undersigned, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Indiana and that I will faithfully, impartially and diligently discharge the duties of the office of Mayor of the City of (), Indiana, according to law and the best of my ability."

Do you know what you just swore? Let's be honest. Did you read the Indiana or U.S. Constitution before signing the Oath of Office? If you did, kudos to you. Your community is already more blessed electing you as their leader than

they realize. If you didn't, you have to ask yourself, as I did, would I swear an oath in any other circumstance and not know what I was swearing?

I encourage you to read both documents. Moreover, encourage your department heads and committee appointments to read them. Keep them handy. They include basic rights you and your citizens have, and they provide rails for the decisions you will have to make. If nothing else, those who see them will at the least assume you take your new responsibilities seriously. And, as the old saying goes, perception is everything.

2. *It's Not Your Money* — We've all heard it's easy to spend someone else's money. Milton Friedman said there are four ways to spend money: "Your money on yourself, your money on someone else, someone else's money on yourself, and someone else's money on someone else."

Friedman compared the latter with the government. Tax revenue, Tax Increment Finance (TIF) funds, sanitary district and utility fees are not your money. Residents were forced to give up a portion of their wealth to live in the city you both call home. Spend it as the limited supply it is, and with long-term goals in mind. Commit to spending it wisely.

3. *Employees* — The city employees are your most valuable asset. Invest in them. They endeavor to provide services to the city with the tools they are given. To provide services efficiently and effectively, the city needs employees who are sufficiently trained and have skills that allow them to compete. Any project you undertake will take longer to complete if the employees do not have the training and skill sets needed.

For example, we decided to tackle automating the payroll. To our surprise, we found the city technology and hardware antiquated. And we sadly learned we had employees who were "not bankable." In other words, banks would not allow the employee to have a checking or savings account for a variety of historical reasons. To my astonishment, in 2008 we had employees who were not computer literate, and could not read or write. Suddenly we were going to ask them to

utilize a computer to access their payroll information and access a paycheck that was automatically deposited.

The solution was a partnership with a local bank that eased access to accounts. We worked with the employees to ensure a smooth transition for them. What was planned as a three-month project, took 18 months.

I was stunned that previous city leadership had been willing to serve the public yet did little or nothing to advance the skills of those who worked for the city. These employees were often locked into low-paying jobs and living at the edge of poverty. Their ability to elevate their families either by advancing inside or outside government employment was non-existent.

Find ways to invest in employees. Partner with your local foundations, educational institutions, state workforce development and local library. There are people in your community willing to provide resources for employee training. Please don't limit yourself to how you can compensate for low pay with increased benefits. Instead, invest energy in finding ways to invest in them directly. You and your city will be much better off.

4. *Read, Read, Read* — Reporters, associates and the public all want to know who the real mayor is, not the public persona. I was surprised when asked by the media what I was currently reading and what books were on my bookshelves. What one reads can tell others who we are, how we think and may provide insight on how we make or will make decisions.

We all think we "know" the key issues in our community, but do we? Get to know your community. During my time in office, the public discussion revolved around the problems of the Rust Belt and how they had impacted communities in east-central Indiana. Poverty levels had risen, high-wage factories were now dilapidated empty shells and the public school system was failing. There was much discussion about economic development, a public policy that the government uses to entice job creation.

I challenge you to fully educate yourself on the issues before you. Public policy topics come and

go. Once implemented, some work, some fail. Your office will have a revolving door of people looking for an opportunity to utilize public funds to make a profit, offset their costs and promise jobs for your city. Some will be good projects for your community, some will not be. Everyone is going to offer advice. Know enough to know when the advice is credible, and when it is not. Find material that will educate you on ways to improve your community and yourself. And, in case you don't have the time to research yourself, at the end of this article I am including some oft-used and wide-ranging titles that sit on my bookshelf.

As my administration was addressing financial distress, some books were especially helpful: "Lean Six Sigma for Service" by Michael L. George, "Performance is the Best Politics" by former Mayor Graham Richard, "Does Your Government Measure Up?" by William D. Coplin and Carol Dwyer and "The Nibble Theory and the Kernel of Power" by Kaleel Jamison. These books provided insight for providing better services with fewer resources.

5. *The Buck Stops in the Mayor's Office* — To do your job well, give your department heads and board appointments the latitude to do their jobs. You will make many decisions as mayor, some you never thought you'd have to make. Understand what those to whom you've delegated responsibility do every day. They need your support. Unfortunately, but realistically, all of you will make mistakes. Some can be fixed, some cannot. In the end, the public will hold you as the mayor accountable. Remember, though, that you are the one who has the final say. Accept the responsibility and own the mistakes of the department heads and board appointments as well. Trust but verify.

A restless night of sleep for me meant the subject of moment needed to be revisited. It's okay to change your mind. Word of advice: If you are doing something you know is wrong and it doesn't bother you, you need to rethink why you asked the public for its trust.

6. *Media* — There are a few things I remember from my seventh grade English class in

Markleville. I particularly remember discussing catchy headlines, being instructed to always answer "the Five W's and H" (who, what, where, when, why and how) and learning the difference between writing a news and an opinion piece.

The public has commented for years over the changes in how news is reported. We now have a continuous news cycle and social media. You may have already noticed the local paper often isn't your friend.

That's not its job. Elected officials from both political parties will always lament how unfairly they are sometimes treated by the media. When our locally owned papers were bought by corporations with distant headquarters, the news as reported changed. No longer does the paper have a local reporter who has the time to become an expert on taxes, or sewage systems, much less know the history of events in the community — or your personal history.

Nonetheless, facts matter. Be prepared to define all topics — the Five W's and How.

I recently ran across this quote: "A people that elect corrupt politicians, imposters, thieves and traitors are not victims . . . but accomplices." Give the public the information they need so they can be held accountable for their vote.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and a host of other social media resources are now available. Use these to provide transparency to your citizens. Lastly, if you have a reporter lie to you, it's on them. Based on my experience, your transparency will trump a reporter's unprofessionalism.

7. *Think Long-term, not Short-term* — Strategic planning is useful. Engage citizens so you can discern what they want for their community. Project the community in five, 10 and 20 years. For example, projects that utilize Tax Increment Finance (TIF) have long-term implications for other community taxing units such as your local school system as well as your city budget. Strategic planning often does not offer an immediate political reward. If your goal is to leave your community better than you found it, think long-term.

My city had a strategic plan that was last updated 20 years before my taking office. It was a strategic plan that was rarely consulted and provided only a bird's eye view of the community. What we needed was a working document that engaged citizens throughout the city. If a community is to change, the citizenry has to embrace it. They are the community.

We developed the Muncie Action Plan, or as it's more commonly known, MAP. It was a nonpartisan, community-wide plan for sustainable growth developed in partnership with local foundations, Ivy Tech Community College and other elected officials and community leaders. MAP is updated regularly and continues to be a guide for the community a decade later.

A short-term project with long-term benefit is to review the city ordinances and the processes involved in operating a business in your city. Update and simplify them to make it friendlier, less expensive and less cumbersome to do business. Be an advocate for small businesses as they are the backbone of your city and employ a surprising number of your citizens.

8. *Grace for Grace* — Again, everyone wants a piece of your time. They are eager to share with you how they want to help, or to tell you why your priorities are wrong. For a four-year term, you will be in office for 35,040 hours, which equals 1,460 days, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For me, given a population of approximately 70,000, if I met every citizen for one-half hour I would have no time for anything else, including sleep.

Make time for friends and family. When you are no longer in office, they are the ones who remain. Continue the activities that bring you joy. There will be many things that can keep you from attending a child's game or cause you to miss a birthday party or skip a family dinner. There will be times when those things, not city business, must be your priority. Fortunately, my family and friends were there throughout. Your family and friends were your priority before you were elected to office. Keep them your priority. They will understand your need to fulfill your role as mayor as well as be a friend or relative. Recently my

church pastor posited that how you spend your time and money tells what your priorities are. I agree, but it is not always easy.

Sometimes you will have to be tough and make decisions that are hurtful to others. And people would ask me how I did what I had to do with the lies, rumors and innuendos surrounding a mayor's office. Candidly, some days it was hard. I took solace and comfort in my faith. Still, I am glad I had the opportunity to serve as my city's mayor.

9. *Don't Go It Alone* — You may already be asking yourself if anyone else understands your days. Yes, there are people who get it. You have fellow mayors across the state who can be a wonderful sounding board. Some will have served longer than you and can provide a seasoned perspective. Many are willing to share their insight on what works and what doesn't. Often, their experiences and how they handle the issues can be a tremendous asset to you. Develop relationships and take advantage of their expertise. Regardless of party affiliation, mayors' days are similar in that the demands exceed available money and time.

You may also be surprised at the impact the state laws can have on your city. You may learn that our state legislature is considering adopting a measure that would harm your community. Be aware and get engaged. Your help may be needed to prevent poor legislation from being passed, or conversely you may be needed to lobby for legislation that will benefit your community and others like yours. Your network of contacts can be of assistance. Furthermore, you may realize that your perspective on a legislative issue is different now that you are a mayor.

10. *The Mayors Creed* — I wondered from time to time if there was a mayor's creed, a set of beliefs or aims to guide decision-making. I never found one specifically. Robert Fulghum proposed in his book, "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten," what a better world it would be if "all government had a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess."

An anonymous poem entitled “My Town” on a plaque given to me by a friend brings me the closest to a creed. It was a good reminder of my promise.

Conclusion

It has been over a decade since I won elective office. As I have reflected on that experience, I say once again that I still consider it a privilege and an honor to have served the citizens of Muncie. It was a rough transition. I won by 14 votes in a recount. Once in office, my administration dealt with the perfect storm — the Great Recession, the failure of subprime mortgages and the subsequently abandoned property, changes in state property assessment policy, property tax caps resulting in significant tax revenue loss, and the loss of our last major manufacturing facility.

Though the citizens allowed my administration only one term, we proudly left the city government better than we found it. We took pride in our transition efforts and teed up the ball for the subsequent mayor. We have been pleased to see many of the projects we worked on come to fruition.

You may have read about Muncie in the papers or heard about its troubles on the television. There have been arrests and jail terms, and trials are pending. What are new mayors to learn from this, you might ask. I suggest that if you know what you swore to do, manage the city’s resources well, invest in employees to keep skills relevant, educate yourself, remember that you are in charge, are transparent, are strategic, exercise grace, support and ask for support from your fellow mayors, and remember it is your town too, you will leave the community better than you found it.

Even so, prepare yourself to accept that your good work may not be carried on after you have left. All you can do is the best you can do while

My Town

*My town is the place where
my house is found,
Business is located, and
Where my vote is cast.
It is where my children are
Educated, and where my life is.
My town has a right to my civic loyalty,
It supports me and I should support it.
My town wants my citizenship,
Not my partisanship.
My friendliness not my dissensions.
My sympathy, not my criticism.
My intelligence not my indifference.
My town supplies me with protection,
Trade, friends, education,
Schools, churches, and the right to
Free moral citizenship.
It has some things better than others.
The best things I should see to make better.
The worst things I should help to suppress.
Take it all-in-all,
It is my town
And it is entitled to the best there is in me.*

you are there. It’s not an easy position for anyone. It will stretch your knowledge, patience, network and your belief that you can make a difference. But you can, and you will. ♦

Recommended Reading

General Resources

- A Framework for Understanding Poverty (Ruby K. Payne)
- Bridges Out of Poverty (Ruby Payne, Philip Devol, Terie Dreussi Smith)
- Boomtown USA (Jack Schultz)
- The U.S. Constitution
- Here Is Your Indiana Government (Indiana Chamber of Commerce)

- The NIV Study Bible (Zondervan)
- The Purpose Driven Life (Rick Warren)
- The Road Less Traveled (M. Scott Peck)
- The Tipping Point (Malcolm Gladwell)
- Summaries of the Leading Cases of the Constitution (Paul Bartholomew, Joseph Menez)

Economics

- Progress and Poverty (Henry George)
- Free to Choose (Milton and Rose Friedman)
- The Fair Tax Book (Neal Boortz and John Linder)
- The Ascent of Money (Niall Ferguson)
- The Entrepreneurial Imperative (Carl Schramm)

Dispute Resolution

Getting to Yes (Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton)

Leadership

- 212* (degree) The Extra Degree (Sam Parker and Mac Anderson)
- Six Disciplines Execution Revolution (Gary Harpst)
- Leadership (Ruldolph Giuliani)
-

- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Stephen Covey)
- Jesus CEO (Larie Beth Jones)
- The Leader in Me (Stephen Covey) It's Not About the Coffee (Howard Behar)

Organizational Improvement

- What Got You Here Won't Get You There (Marshall Goldsmith)
- Good to Great (Jim Collins)
- The Kaizen Revolution (Michael Regan and Mark Slattery)
- The Oz Principle (Roger Connors, Tom Smith and Craig Hickman)

Miscellaneous

- At the Crossroads (Abe Aamidor and Ted Evanoff)
- The Forgotten Man (Amity Shlaes)
- The Arrogance of Humanism (David Ehrenfeld)
- The Next 100 Years (George Friedman)
- Amazing Grace (Jonathan Kozol)
- Passion, Politics and Patriotism in a Small Town (Richard Muti)
- Caught in The Middle (Richard Longworth)
- Losing Ground (Charles Murray)

Law Allows States to Veto Hospital Competition

Americans spend more on health care now than ever before, and so-called certificate of need laws (or CON laws) are part of the reason why. On the books in 36 states, including Indiana, CON laws hike prices and create shortages of care, sometimes with tragic results, under the theory that bureaucrats can do a better job of balancing the supply and demand of health care than the market would. Although the laws differ from state to state, they often require that health care providers seeking to offer new services — everything from drug treatment centers to MRI machines to additional hospital beds — get permission from state regulators before doing so. In all of these cases, CON laws are purely economic regulations, not a safeguard against careless providers. In practice, CON laws often allow existing providers to effectively veto new competition. — *Eric Boehm in the Feb. 26, 2020, Reason magazine*

Eric Schansberg

Who Are You and What Have You Done with Elizabeth Warren?

Eric Schansberg, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the foundation, is professor of economics at Indiana University Southeast. This is a cited expansion of an essay distributed last fall by the foundation.



(Feb. 7) — When one of my sons does something unexpected, I like to joke: “Who are you and what have you done with my son?” After reading Elizabeth Warren’s three books on politics, I had the same question about her.¹

The first, “The Two-Income Trap” in 2003 is moderate politically and even conservative socially.² Beyond that, some of her arguments on public policy consequences are so well-reasoned that it brings a tear to an economist’s eye. But really, the book is the sort of thing you’d expect from an academic — thorough work, thoughtful analysis, and careful conclusions (or at least, its appearance).³

With newfound influence and fame, Warren became a politician — a senator and presidential candidate. That’s not necessarily a problem. One would hope that she would have brought the best of her academic background to her new career.

Unfortunately, she turned over a new leaf. The second and third books are a combination of biography and political rhetoric — with notably little of the impressive analysis she displayed in the first book. And her political career can be summarized as a stunning example of hypocrisy against her first book that I’ll share toward the end of this essay.

Murphy’s Law, ‘Playing by the Rules’ and Financial Woes

Warren’s thesis in “The Two Income Trap” is that when financial troubles come, life often falls apart for average people who “play by the rules.” If they don’t have enough money saved, they may not have the margin to get through the difficulty. They can’t make payments; they borrow money; and they dig a hole that can end in bankruptcy.

If people live responsibly, then we’d hope that such occasions would be rare and anecdotal, rather than all-too-common and part of a trend. Of course, one can reasonably quibble with Warren by noting that a refusal to save enough money to deal with common problems is not exactly living responsibly or “playing by the rules” of the game of life — as life really works.

Warren’s concerns, interests, and questions follow naturally from her research and her assessment of the problems: Can the catalysts for financial trouble be mitigated through public policy? Should we use policy to restrict those who lend money to people, especially those in distress? And how can we encourage people to handle their personal finances more effectively?

¹ Warren has had a prolific writing career, including many journal articles and academic books. For her far-less political books that develop her most relevant research interests in bankruptcy law and personal finance, see: *The Fragile Middle Class: Americans in Debt* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); and *As We Forgive Our Debtors: Bankruptcy and Consumer Credit in America* (co-authored with Teresa Sullivan and Jay Westbrook; London: Oxford University Press, 1989).

² *The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Mothers and Fathers Are Going Broke* (New York: Perseus, 2003; co-authored with her daughter, Amelia Warren Tyagi). Christopher Caldwell (“Elizabeth Warren, Closet Conservative,” *The Washington Examiner*, August 2011) described it as “populist, conservative, even right-wing . . . a brilliant and counterintuitive work of pop economics.”

³ Philip Shuchman helped her obtain a grant for earlier research in *As We Forgive Our Debtors*. But later, he crushed the book in a book review (43 *Rutgers Law Review* 185, Vol. 43: 185-245, 1990-91). He asserts the presence of “serious errors,” a refusal to allow other scholars access to the data, and even “repeated instances of scientific misconduct.” (An investigation by the relevant academic body found no merit to the latter charge.) Peter Suderman (“Elizabeth Warren’s Plans Don’t Add Up,” *Reason*, October 2019) notes the basic concerns with their data: the study was based on three large states (Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Texas) and it was conducted in 1981 (a recession year that was prior to a substantial reform in bankruptcy law in 1984). So, it’s not clear how well the results should have been generalized to the rest of the country, a normal economy, or a post-reform landscape. And from what I’ve read in her three political books, Warren inexplicably spends no time on discussing the substantial Bankruptcy Reform Acts of 1978 to explain the vast increases in bankruptcy that she observes.

If people are struggling with debt, it can only be an income or spending problem. Household incomes are generally higher, so there must be more spending too. The title of her relevant chapter is “the over-consumption myth.” But the “myth” is true, by definition. People in debt have necessarily over-consumed — spent more than they have. What she really means is that the spending is not “frivolous.”⁴

Warren presents data on changes in spending over time — and reports that the bulk of the increased spending comes from housing. Houses are not much fancier, but they are bigger. That said, a larger issue is what Warren rightly (and impressively) sees as the connection between housing values, school quality, and neighborhood safety (“The Two Income Trap”: 25, 28). This leads her to advocate greatly expanded school choice — vouchers, charters, and so on — to break the link between housing and schools.

More spending and more income could leave budgets in the same place, on net. But Warren notes the growing prevalence of two working parents. And if trouble comes — e.g., from job loss and health problems — families have less flexibility to fix their income or adjust their spending.⁵ (Warren’s parents used this approach when her father struggled with health and the job market — and her mother slid into the work force to help out.)

One of the ironies with housing is that it is not a frivolous cost. And as a fixed cost in one’s budget, it creates much more strain if household income is compromised. Housing is often sold as a responsible purchase, an investment, a middle-class ideal. But

with income troubles, the monthly cost of housing can be an albatross to a strained budget.

Warren also notes other concerns. The problems increase with the instabilities of divorce and cohabitation — both of which have become far more prevalent. If two parents are working, it’s at least twice as likely that one loses a job. And if labor markets have more “churn” than in past decades, the likelihood of trouble increases further. As such, Warren laments the “two-income trap” of both parents working. (She’s careful to say that this is not opposition to women working per se. But the implication is that the second spouse working — usually, women — does create much of the problem at hand.)⁶

So, Warren makes a compelling case that our approach to life has changed, creating more potential for budget troubles. One implication is the need for a different, more-disciplined approach to personal finance — something that gets a full chapter in “The Two Income Trap” and a separate (non-political) book from her on the topic.⁷ As an aside, it’s probably worth noting that all of this has led to the popularity of Dave Ramsey and other gurus who have stepped into this vacuum to help people handle personal finances more wisely. Warren’s 2003 *Policy Prescriptions*

In terms of policy, her prescriptions in “The Two Income Trap” were moderate and rather mild — especially when compared with her later two books and her proposals as a candidate for president. This policy modesty stemmed from her relatively impressive understanding of how markets work.

⁴ In a later chapter, Warren argues (and provides evidence) that the problem is not a greater reluctance to pay one’s bills — a drop in morality that might lead people to renege on debts.

⁵ Some of Warren’s later research focused on bankruptcy caused by health care expenses, garnering significant attention and impacting the relevant political debates, including the implemented “Affordable Care Act” and the proposed “Medical Bankruptcy Fairness Act” (Health Affairs [2005] and American Journal of Medicine [2009]; both co-authored with Himmelstein et. al.). This work has attracted substantial criticism on methodological grounds (Dranove & Millenson [Health Affairs, 2006] and Dobkin et. al. [New England Journal of Medicine, 2018]): selection bias, confusing correlation with causality, assuming health care expenses were the only or primary cause, and a strange definition of “solidly middle class” (starting at \$25,000 household income). The result was a vast overstatement of the cause-and-effect claimed: 40% and 62% in Warren’s research vs. 4% in the recent work. Suderman (2019) provides a brief but useful overview of the academic literature.

⁶ On women entering the labor force, Warren critiques the Left and the Right — the Left for assuming that it was all benefit and no cost; the Right for underestimating the value of women at home (TT: 67).

⁷ *All Your Worth: The Ultimate Lifetime Money Plan* (with Amelia Warren Tyagi; New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005).

In trying to address higher housing prices, Warren critiques a “usual liberal approach” like price ceilings: “We don’t think the solution lies with such complex regulations. Indeed, any effort to eliminate the fundamental forces of supply and demand with such artificial constraints might actually worsen the situation by diminishing the incentive to build new houses or improve older ones.” (33) Sounds like a candidate to teach *Principles of Microeconomics*

Warren continues: “Nor would we argue for outright government subsidies...America simply cannot afford mass subsidies for its middle class to buy housing. Besides, direct subsidies are likely to add more ammunition to the already ruinous bidding wars, ultimately driving home prices even higher.” (33) She clearly understands how subsidies distort markets and inflate prices.

Instead, Warren argues that we should change how schools are funded. “In order to free families from [the two-income] trap, it is necessary to go to the heart of the problem: public education. Bad schools impose indirect — but huge — costs on millions of middle-class families . . . The only way to take pressure off these families is to change the schools.” (33) From there, she advocates vouchers where “tax dollars would follow the children”; she notes the need to have larger vouchers for those with disabilities; and she wants to extend this approach into preschool (35, 121).

Warren notes the claim that vouchers “drain off” funds, but argues against it: “the public-versus-private competition misses the central point. The problem is not vouchers; the problem is [a lack of] parental choice.” (34) She acknowledges that “an all-voucher system would be a shock to the educational system, but the shakeout might be just what the system needs.” (36) She respects the central role of choice and competition to well-functioning markets for the benefit of consumers and society.

Warren makes similar arguments to critique subsidies for day care proposed by some on the Left.

“It is time for a hard look at this sacred cow. How much help would subsidized day care really offer to middle-class families?...The long-term financial implications are more complex . . . no help for families with a stay-at-home mother . . . create yet another comparative disadvantage for single-income families trying to compete in the marketplace . . . In effect, government-subsidized daycare would add one more indirect pressure on others to join the workforce.” (39-40) Again, she exhibits a sophisticated understanding of why subsidies cause so much damage.

Warren’s prescriptions are not universally impressive and her understanding of markets is not always so sharp. She advocates subsidized child care for single parents (122), despite the inherent incentive problems. She complains about inflation in higher education (45), but she relies on “sticker price” (rather than tuition paid) — a common error. She sees an increase in demand for college, but imagines that supply is somehow fixed, leading to higher prices. And while she’s clearly aware of the impact of subsidies in other areas, she doesn’t seem to see it here. (Or maybe she didn’t mind subsidies in her own industry.)⁸

Warren also doesn’t understand the level of competition in banking — or the connections between risk and rate-of-return (129, 146, 148). If borrowers seem to present more risk, lenders will (reasonably) charge them higher rates. Moreover, she doesn’t seem to catch the role of the government in distorting financial markets and causing trouble for consumers and taxpayers — whether Fannie Mae in general (33, 159) or efforts to sell homes to disadvantaged minority groups in particular (136).

Finally, Warren’s level of trust toward consumers, particularly the poor and certain minority groups is not very high. “They didn’t know they could do any better.” (135) The market “hits minority homeowners with particular force,” especially African-Americans and Hispanics (136, 146, 147, 159; “This Fight Is our Fight”: 38). And she

⁸ More debatable but still reasonable: Warren advocates reform and expansion of federal long-term disability insurance (TT: 92-94). She also advocates subsidies for all middle-class savings, phasing out with higher incomes (TT: 69-70). She doesn’t address sales taxes of various sorts, which would accomplish similar goals. But to be fair, the better versions of “fair tax” legislation were not available until after her first book was published.

doesn't see — or doesn't mind — a reduction in lending from her proposed regulations, for homes and credit to the same minority groups (147, 149).

Warren, Politics, and 'The Fight'

Unfortunately, most of the impressive things about Warren went out the proverbial window when she became a politician. It's easy to see when you compare "The Two Income Trap" to her other two political books: "A Fighting Chance" in 2014 and "This Fight Is our Fight" in 2017.⁹ The two later books are as different from the first as they are similar to each other. The second is more biography and the third is more about policy advocacy.¹⁰ But both move toward rhetoric and boilerplate — and (far) away from careful analysis. And both ignore the economic cause-and-effect she identifies so ably in her first book.

Her posturing and rhetoric are annoying, but probably par for an unfortunate course in politics. She invokes Trumpian language by arguing that people are correct to be angry ("This Fight Is our Fight": 4). "The game is rigged" is a favored phrase in both books for how to think about government ("A Fighting Chance": 2,3; "This Fight Is our Fight": 59). She wants corporations and the wealthy "to pay a little more" ("A Fighting Chance": 215). She claims to be worried about loopholes, but only has criticism for 1980s tax reforms ("This Fight Is our Fight": 114,116).¹¹

Warren gets particularly exorcised in the more recent book when talking about President Trump. She asserts that the election of Trump would "deliver one more body blow to so many working families . . . life was about to get a whole lot tougher." ("This Fight Is our Fight": 3) The "middle class was already on its knees . . . Trump could be the punch that

knocked out everyone's lights and changed our country forever . . . Trump seem determined to crush the last vestiges of hope . . . " ("This Fight Is our Fight": 215) Trump is a mess, but Warren's hyperbole is strange for an academic and disturbing for a politician.¹²

Warren's New Policy Positions

Posturing is a problem, but policy is more important. And her policy prescriptions have flipped, evolved, and grown appendages. New policy preferences have emerged that seem unrelated to her expertise, her previous views, or anything aside from what looks like a crass grab for political power. She now emphasizes spending on infrastructure and research — and is a fan of unions ("A Fighting Chance": 2;/"This Fight Is our Fight": 102, 104). And a higher minimum wage is somehow the first policy she discusses in her crusade "to save American's middle class." ("This Fight Is our Fight": 7-10)

Other policy positions have evolved or flipped — without analysis or explanation for the changed views. In education, she had emphasized "school choice" and local-state funding. But now, there's no mention of choice and her funding ideas are centralized and federal ("This Fight Is our Fight": 4, 100). She applauds the GI Bill's vouchers for college, but her avid support for K-12 vouchers has disappeared ("This Fight Is our Fight": 100). She opposed broad subsidies, but now wants vast subsidies for college — past, present, and future ("A Fighting Chance": 2; "This Fight Is our Fight": 100).

The flips go beyond education. She now advocates subsidies for child care. She complains about food stamps as a subsidy to WalMart — by ripping WalMart instead of the subsidies ("This

⁹ *A Fighting Chance* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2014) and *This Fight Is Our Fight: The Battle to Save America's Middle Class* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2017).

¹⁰ Warren's biographical information has always ranged from common (her Oklahoma, lower-middle class roots) to elite (a lawyer teaching at Harvard) to famously strange (claiming a Native American "background" ["A Fighting Chance": 239-240] and "ancestry" ["This Fight Is our Fight": 224]). And there has been controversy about her claim that she was fired after getting pregnant. "The principal did what I think a lot of principals did back then — wished me good luck, didn't ask me back for the next school year, and hired someone else for the job" ("A Fighting Chance"-14).

¹¹ Warren falsely claims that the lower marginal tax rates in the 1980s led to reduced tax revenues ("This Fight Is our Fight": 114,116).

¹² Another clue about her distorted views (or her willingness to use inflammatory and inaccurate rhetoric) is describing the Koch brothers as "ultraconservative" rather than libertarian ("This Fight Is our Fight": 161-162).

Fight Is our Fight": 24-25). She understood the problems with price ceilings on housing, but then misses that the Affordable Care Act caused trouble with "low wages and unpredictable schedules." ("This Fight Is our Fight": 28) And her sense of cause and effect has changed: from women voluntarily joining the work force out of newfound cultural freedom and economic opportunity — to the coercion of "growing financial pressure [to send] everyone to work."¹³ ("This Fight Is our Fight": 30-31)

Given Warren's research on consumer debt and "predatory finance," one can imagine an evolution toward populism, distrust of corporations, concern about market outcomes, and faith in government solutions — in that arena. Given her exaggerated sense of its benefits and a diminished sense of its costs, one can imagine how she has too little cynicism about government regulation.¹⁴ Given her simplistic and erroneous views on macroeconomics¹⁵ and macroeconomic history¹⁶ (especially the Great Depression),¹⁷ one can imagine how she could be too optimistic about government activism.¹⁸

Warren concludes: "I'm a deeply pro-market person. I believe that competition delivers great value for American consumers. That's why I also believe in enough regulations to keep those markets honest." ("This Fight Is our Fight": 149) The good

news: Warren is "pro-market," rather than the "pro-business" of crony capitalism. But she ends up in elitism and a strain of Progressivism, advocating heavy doses of regulation — since she "believes" in competition, but not companies or consumers.

All of these are reasonable stories for some of her policy evolution, I suppose. But none of this explains her newfound, broad excitement about government subsidies — in the face of the impressive understanding she exhibited in TT. Beyond grand plans that can't possibly be financed through wealth and income taxes, her recent and avid embrace of wide-ranging and extensive subsidies — for college, student loan forgiveness, child care, and health care — makes no sense and has no apparent cause.

Why Does Warren Have So Much Faith in Government?

The other strange thing about Warren is that her faith in government co-exists with her profound and wide-ranging pessimism about how government works in practice. In all of her books, she frequently complains about how government functions — whether cronyism or ineptitude, from politicians and bureaucrats to expert witnesses, lobbyists, and lawyers. At the end of the day, this may be the most difficult thing to reconcile about her views, since she

¹³ To her credit, Warren lays out an implicit critique of President Obama's economic record ("This Fight Is our Fight": 17). She doesn't mention his historically-tepid economic recovery, but she doesn't embrace the common Democrat hypocrisy of lauding Obama's strong stock market with his rough economy — a record that would have been roundly criticized by the same folks if the president had been Republican.

¹⁴ Warren cites FDR's efforts to pass "laws to make the economy safer." ("This Fight Is our Fight": 68) She imagines him as an anti-trust maven, artificially elevating the value of regulation ("This Fight Is our Fight": 71). She complains about market consolidation, while missing the necessary impact of greater regulations on economies of scale and greater market concentration ("This Fight Is our Fight": 88). She also misses the greater competition today because of greatly-reduced transaction costs.

¹⁵ Warren claims that investments in research have an "immediate" multiplier of 2.2 on the economy ("This Fight Is our Fight": 132). So, of course, more government spending there would be a glorious thing.

¹⁶ Warren seems unaware of the trouble caused by the Fed's inflation from the 1960s into the early 1980s — for the economy in general and "savings and loans" in particular ("This Fight Is our Fight": 82).

¹⁷ Warren applauds FDR's policy experimentation, although the results of the New Deal were lousy and the experiments served to increase uncertainty in already-fragile markets ("This Fight Is our Fight": 67). She argues that government passed "strong laws" during the Great Depression to help consumers and producers, without explaining how wage and price floors could possibly serve both of those masters ("This Fight Is our Fight": 72). She conveniently skips through the length of FDR's Great Depression to reach World War II as the solution ("This Fight Is our Fight": 74). See: Amity Shlaes (The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression, New York: Harper Collins, 2007) for critiques of these claims.

¹⁸ Warren sums up her view of macroeconomic activism and regulation with a simple graph ("This Fight Is our Fight": 92) — where everything was peaches and cream between the Great Depression of 1929 and the Great Recession of 2007, both of which were supposedly caused by "deregulation."

repeatedly provides compelling reasons why she (and we) should not trust government.

She worried about a new financial bureaucracy being run by Tim Geithner, someone she saw as a political hack ("A Fighting Chance": 185).¹⁹ She notes that a small mistake in writing successful legislation led to huge problems ("A Fighting Chance": 175). She complains about the government making huge profits in student loans ("This Fight Is our Fight": 121-127). She informs readers about "cromnibus" — the combination of "continuing resolutions" and giant "omnibus" spending bills that Congress uses to inefficiently fund government spending ("This Fight Is our Fight": 152). And she critiques expert witnesses in lobbying ("This Fight Is our Fight": 193).²⁰

In a word, she's well aware of the perils of government — from incompetence to crony capitalism. But she also believes that she can harness government to her liking and doesn't trust the market left to its own devices. Ultimately, Peter Suderman probably understands her political philosophy best: "The economy is fundamentally fixable — but only if Elizabeth Warren is manipulating all the levels of power."²¹

On Political Animals

So, here's the most amazing story in Warren's books. She cut her teeth in academics, advocacy, politics, and second-tier fame through her work in bankruptcy law. And for what might seem like a dry topic, the narrative is a relatively compelling read: the research findings, the policy implications, invitations to meet with powerful people and to testify in front of Congress, the opposing lobbyists and various political machinations.²²

The highlight is Warren's opportunity to meet with then-First Lady Hillary Clinton. Warren and her colleagues had come up with a "good" bankruptcy bill, but it had been supplanted by a "bad" bill brought forward by industry lobbyists.²³ Congress and President Bill Clinton supported the law. But Warren got the opportunity to talk with Hillary in May 1998 — after she saw Warren's op-ed in *The New York Times*.

Warren was really impressed by Hillary: "She ate fast and asked questions even faster. I have taught bankruptcy law to thousands of students — some of them among the brightest in the country — but I never saw one like Mrs. Clinton. Impatient, lightning-quick, interested in all the nuances . . ." (TT: 124) And apparently open to reason: Warren persuades Hillary — and then Hillary persuades Bill to veto the bill when it finally gets to his desk in October 2000.

That's heady stuff and high drama — at least for a piece of legislation. But here's the kicker: The bill is reintroduced in Congress the next Spring. "This time, freshman Senator Hillary Clinton voted in favor of the bill . . . The bill was essentially the same but Hillary Rodham Clinton was not . . . Her husband was a lame duck at the time he vetoed the bill; he could afford to forgo future campaign contributions. As New York's newest senator, however, it seems that Hillary Clinton could not afford such a principled position." (TT: 125-126)

Ouch. But Warren isn't done. She brings it up again, 30 pages later: "Senator Hillary Clinton bowed to big business. She had her chance to vote on what she had called that 'awful bill.' . . . Senator Clinton had taken \$140,000 in campaign contributions from the banking industry, and she

¹⁹ Caldwell (2011) describes the broader landscape this way: "Almost every step the Obama administration took in the early stages of the crisis pitted its own heavy hitters against her."

²⁰ Warren seems comfortable knowing which experts she can trust — e.g., on climate change ("This Fight Is our Fight": 199).

²¹ Suderman (2019).

²² She mentions all of this in her most political book ("This Fight Is our Fight"), but writes about it in considerable detail in her first book (TT) and her more biographical book (TC).

²³ I don't know the field of bankruptcy law at all. But given my general concerns and knowledge about cronyism — in theory and in the data — I might easily agree with her assessment of good and bad bills.

proved willing to overcome her ‘strong reservations’ about” the bill.²⁴ (TT: 156) Boom.

Eleven years later, Warren tells the story again in “A Fighting Chance”. This time, she shares Hillary’s role in persuading Bill to veto the bill, but does not mention Hillary’s affirmative vote in 2001 (“A Fighting Chance”: 65-66). Of course, now that Warren is a senator, especially if she has even higher aspirations in 2014, her redacted re-telling is a smart political move.²⁵ But her new narrative is also indicative of Warren’s emergence as a political animal herself.

We’ve seen her amazing flips on public policy: from one who knew better and opposed — to someone who pretended not to know better and supported. The hypocrisy is stunning in any case, but especially because she crushes Hillary for the exact same move — and Warren’s own sins in this regard are far worse.

Fight the Power

So, what happened to Elizabeth? One gets the sense that Bernie doesn’t know any better. He’s not thoughtful enough to understand how much he overstates government’s ability; disciplined enough to lay out the costs of his grand proposals; or self-reflective enough to catch the irony of his own capitalistic practices. But from her first book, it is patently clear that Elizabeth does understand. And that’s probably more troubling. Ignorance with self-righteousness is one thing. Knowing better and then arguing otherwise is a different sort of evil.

In October, I heard Rod Dreher speak at the 2019 Touchstone Conference on “The Benedict Option.” Dreher had been a devoted Catholic, but “lost his faith” as he investigated the Catholic sexual abuse scandal for The New York Times.

He started to obsess on the important work he was doing. He began to imagine that he was indispensable. He didn’t take steps to ground his work in something greater. In Christian terms, “the good fight” became an idol — and idols always fail.

When Dreher used the term “fight” in his speech to describe his worthy crusade, it immediately brought Warren’s last two books to mind — with “fight” in both titles (once in 2014 and twice along with “battle” in 2017) and “fighting” as the most prominent metaphor she uses to paint her own efforts.²⁶

My best guess — and I think, the most gracious interpretation of her hypocritical flips — is that she has traveled a similar path to Dreher.

The ends slowly began to justify the means. Or maybe “subsidizing the wrong people” — through TARP and banks that were “too big to fail” — sent her over the edge. Or maybe losing the “bankruptcy war” to Hillary and the lobbyists embittered her. In any case, the cause made it acceptable to strive for power. “The fight” became everything — and principles, wisdom, and insight became the casualties.²⁷

It can be hoped that Warren will not get to enforce her preferred version of society and her hypocrisies on others. And as Dreher eventually learned, hopefully Warren will find that there are things much more important than “the fight.” When the ends justify the means, it’s never ultimately good for those who misunderstand — or those they try to influence and control. ♦

²⁴ Warren also throws a haymaker at Joe Biden: “Senators like Joe Biden should not be allowed to sell out women in the morning and be heralded as their friend in the evening.” (TT: 161)

²⁵ Warren notes that she was neutral on Hillary vs. Bernie in 2016 (“This Fight Is our Fight”: 221). Again, this was probably smart politically, but one wonders if her (deserved) attack on Hillary in 2003 played any role. That said, Hillary did ask Elizabeth to speak at the 2016 Democratic convention (“This Fight Is our Fight”: 226).

²⁶ The title and anti-Trump tenor of the CBS web-television series “the Good Fight” echoes the same themes.

²⁷ Warren writes about Trump’s impending victory in 2016: “I kept thinking [praying]: We’ve got to win this. Please, please, please.” (“This Fight Is our Fight”: 3) That’s the sort of thing one says when they take something like politics far too seriously.

Special Reports

Wither or Whether Democracy?

Eric Schansberg, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the foundation, is professor of economics at Indiana University Southeast. This is a cited expansion of an essay distributed last fall by the foundation.



(Feb. 22) — Ryszard Legutko is a Polish philosophy professor who has lived through communism and democracy — and is not impressed by either. Communism is more obviously flawed, relying on naked coercion, resulting in economic and social deprivation. But certain modern manifestations of “liberal democracy” are often driven by similar motives, mechanics, and machinations. In *The Demon in Democracy*, Legutko compares the two and helps his readers understand contemporary Western politics.

Legutko’s comparison is provocative. But our first consideration is definitional — trying to understand what he means by “liberal democracy.” (If readers are not clear on his use of the term, they will badly misunderstand his arguments.) I typically use the terms “Left” and “progressive” for what he has in mind: an optimism about human nature, the implications for historical progress, a strong bent toward statism, and an attraction to technocratic solutions through “elites” in government and society. I like “progressive” in particular, because it connects to the history of the Progressive Era in America.

In these matters, I’m not sure that any simple label can be definitive. (For example, what is a “conservative” or a “liberal”?) Another problem: Legutko describes “Liberal Democracy” (LD) as a “system”—which he then compares to the system of communism. But LD is really a system of thought acting within a democratic system. As such, he is not critiquing the essence of democracy

or democratic systems — nearly as much as a perverse permutation of democratic thought.

All this said, Legutko is certainly correct in describing “liberalism” of one sort that is combined with idolatry toward a type of “democracy” that is currently a powerful faction within Western democracies. And so, the book is well worth reading, since he successfully describes a key aspect of modern politics — as it manifests in statism, elitism, political correctness, along with dogmatism and self-righteousness.

The insidiousness of LD is troubling (22). It seems both “liberal” (in the sense of freedom, choice, etc.) and “democratic” (subject to “the will of the people” — rather than “rulers”). But even casual observers know that matters are more complicated. Self-styled “liberals” often act in a stunningly “illiberal” manner. Public Choice economists remind us that democracy can easily be exploited by interest groups and politicians in opposition to a “rationally ignorant and apathetic” general public. Christians point to the Fall and worry about the pursuit and exercise of power by sinful people. The influence of post-modernism has led to an increase in moral relativism, identity politics and the pursuit of power.

To the extent that communism and Legutko’s LD are similar, it’s also important to explain why (5). As it turns out, “The two regimes stem from the same root, or more precisely, from the same, not particularly good, inclination of modern man, persistently revealing itself under different political circumstances.” (177) To do this, Legutko divides his book into five chapters — each highlighting parallels between the two: a strong sense of the (“progressive”) path of “History”; a “Utopian” end of history (under their guidance); the over-arching role of “Politics”; the dominance of “Ideology” (and a subsequent intolerance toward dissent); and the threat of “Religion” (especially Christianity).

History

Both are “modernization projects” with a temptation to hubris (5-6). “The world cannot be tolerated as it is . . . the old should be replaced

with the new . . .” (6) As such, things can quickly get illiberal: “any opposition to this process [is] extremely harmful to humanity and inconceivably stupid . . . hopelessly parochial” — and that opposition is defined as “the enemy of progress.” (14) LD has never been as explicit as communism in this regard, but the comparison is uncanny.

Legutko also points to a re-imagining of history — where LD is seen as the supposed key in battling Soviet communism (139-140). Instead, their responses ranged from admiration to appeasement. (Remember their nervous or even apoplectic responses to Reagan’s critique of “the Evil Empire,” his saber-rattling and military build-up?) Legutko also notes that fascism was seen by the Left as a far greater problem than communism — when the historical data do not support this view. “Perhaps the democratic liberals intuitively sensed they had a deeper bond . . . with the communists than the anticommunists.” (141)

Utopia

Again, the communists are more explicit, but LD implicitly has the same utopian vision. There are no real alternatives; anything other than democracy would be worse; and “if liberal democracy is not accepted, then society will fall prey to authoritarianism, fascism, and theocracy.” (43) A clear indication of utopianism and idolatry: “the remedy for the weaknesses of democracy is more democracy.” (53) We see this both in terms of policy (always more government) — as well as a passion to increase the number of voters (including non-citizens and reducing the age for suffrage), to make voting easier, and to sell voting as a civic even sacred duty.

Among other things, Legutko notes that the connection between democracy and freedom is over-rated: other systems are as good or better at promoting freedom. And democratic governance often militates against freedom — from illiberal approaches in domestic policy to softness against the USSR, terrorism, and dictatorships in foreign policy (45-46).

As I like to joke, the best form of government is clearly the benevolent and knowledgeable dictator — except for the problem of finding a good and wise leader. Even the “ancient thinkers” saw the pros and cons of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy — and suggested that the best strategy might be to “mix the three types.” (55) The Founding Fathers “treated democracy — as well as other political models — with great suspicion and therefore devised a complex political mechanism to alleviate its weaknesses.” (51) “Before it disappeared, giving way to the idolatry of democracy, the concept of a hybrid system . . . played a creative role in political thought and practice, as it prevented the politicians from falling into utopianism.” (57)

Tocqueville shared the same concerns, seeing democracy as “the sole ruler of the American mind” and “more a problem than a solution . . . What he saw at the end of the democratic road was a new despotism.” (51) Legutko quotes Tocqueville: “I know no country in which there is less independence of mind and less freedom of thought than in America” (59). It’s difficult to imagine him being more impressed by us today.

Politics

Legutko notes that both have produced intense politicization (73). In communism, true politics was the responsibility of the Party; the general public was left to support the Party or oppose it and be punished (74). In democracy and especially LD, the goal is to make life more political — by increasing the quantity and level of participation (81).

But this turns out to be a cover for interest groups and politicians to rule in the best interests of “the people”: “The idea that democracy is a system where we, the voters, have broad offerings to choose from . . . never accorded with the facts . . . This phenomenon should not be surprising given the nature of democratic man: a rather uninspired being, not much interested in the world around him, closed within his own prejudices, and amenable to the impulses of mimicry.” (82)

This extends beyond politics to the culture at large — in LD, as evidenced by the popularity of “virtue signaling,” the emergence of “cancel culture,” and the genesis of “woke politics” (100). “The government is not the only agent that is supposed to oversee the rules of cooperation and fight against all the non-collaborative groups. Actually, this responsibility rests on everyone’s shoulders . . .” (102) In this, LD is arguably more impressive than communism, since more people have been persuaded to report and attack their fellow citizens in a form of fascism. It is “to some extent a response to public demand and not an arbitrary act of violence against society.” (102)

Legutko sees all of this as “the democratization of liberalism” — with the state unleashing “hyperactivity” by interest groups, politicians, and other social institutions, including media, entertainment (122), and even advertising (121). Given their skills, Intellectuals are helpful in this endeavor (102) — and teachers, even more so, since they can indoctrinate the young and unwashed (136). The result has been “constant pressure” to clamor for more “rights” and to distribute more privileges (61-63).

Ideology

Both place a great emphasis on Ideology. It is a “convenient tool in political conflicts: It allowed discrediting one’s opponent without entering into a substantive argument,” (114) Analysis and argument are often inconclusive; labeling others as representing various interests is much cleaner. Moderation can be painted as compromise; enemy status becomes clearer and cleaner. Tolerance is rejected as an approach, since it is seen as condoning the unacceptable.

The ideologue “lives in a constant state of mobilization for a better world. His mouth is full of noble slogans . . . ready to sacrifice . . . an incomparable sense of moral self-confidence,” dogmatism and self-righteousness (117). Moreover, he is a fundamentalist who is especially prone to confirmation biases, as they “reduce everything to what they know” (124) and never have “the slightest doubt that [they are] in

possession of the entirety of the human experience” (126). They are “very reluctant to learn” but “all too eager to teach” (126). “Their opinions have the same tedious predictability, their arguments are based on similarly crude syllogisms, their styles are similarly vulgar, and their minds are equally dogmatic, unperturbed by any testimony from outside and prone to the same degree of zealousness.” (138)

Legutko notes that his original, post-communist hopes were soon dashed: “Those of us who had such high hopes met with disappointment . . . Very quickly the world became hidden under a new ideological shell and the people became hostage to another version of the Newspeak . . . Obligatory rituals of loyalty and condemnations were revived, this time with a different object of worship and a different enemy . . . self-proclaimed authority to track down ideological apostasy and condemn the unorthodox — all, of course, for the glory of the new system and the good of the new man.” (128) And instead of liberality, “a lot of things simply could not be discussed.” (130)

Whereas communism had class distinctions, LD has class, race, sexuality, and gender. “To be sure, there are different actors in both cases, and they perform similar roles: a proletarian was replaced by a homosexual, a capitalist by a fundamentalist, exploitation by discrimination, a communist revolutionary by a feminist, and a red flag by a vagina,” (123) For both, “these obligations are non-negotiable. Others can be ignored,” (8) And so, we’re into idolatry and a willingness to allow the ends to justify the means.

Legutko sees “equality” as the key driver in both (132-136). But in practice, despotism is an inevitable fruit of the avid pursuit of equality. The goal cannot be reached: “the struggle for equality has no ending,” (135) And as power is doled out to enforce equality, inequality is necessarily increased (133). (For excellent fiction on how this plays out at the extremes, see: Ayn Rand’s novella, *Anthem*, and Kurt Vonnegut’s short story, “Harrison Bergeron,”)

Religion

Legutko notes that the communists properly saw the Church as their strongest barrier (146). In both communism and LD, Christian faith is often opposed as a form of “Christophobia” or privatized into irrelevance (154). “Christianity itself is of little worth, and whatever is of value in it, it is better expressed and more forcefully implemented by liberal democracy.” (171)

Progressives often have the strange sense that they are both invincible and amazingly vulnerable at the same time. Legutko describes this in broad terms (104-105), but especially with respect to Christianity. Religious faith is supposedly both the weak link in the chain of human progress and the most devastating opponent for LD: “On the one hand, there is an ever-present feeling of satisfaction that Christianity has been in retreat for some time, being driven back by a victorious wave of secularization; on the other hand, it is invariably seen as an evil that miraculously resurrects itself and continues to cast its ominous shadow over Western civilization.” (159)

Applications and Implications

As a European, Legutko is particularly focused on the European Union. His analysis helps to explain the incoherent angst about England leaving Brexit (69-72, 85-92) — as well as his particular interest in the illiberal and undemocratic critiques of post-communist governance in Poland and Hungary (89, 141).

If Lysenko were an American, he probably would have discussed the fragility of a continued “liberal” majority on the SCOTUS (171). Moreover, this is a clear example where progressives seem quite willing to allow the ends to justify their means — for example, in matters such as packing and stacking the SCOTUS, crassly manipulating the system as necessary (85).

With Legutko’s references to artists and entertainers, I was reminded of David Mamet’s observations in *The Secret Knowledge* (2011). Communism and LD have both “had spectacular victories” among the “artistic elites” (139). This is initially puzzling until you realize that their

artistry is faux — or subsumed to ideology in pursuit of meaning, power, and privilege. They are “particularly susceptible” (24) and “willingly gather in herds,” (124) As such, in both, “ideas and works of art had to be ideologically correct,” (122) That’s why it was so delicious when Ricky Gervais skewered the Hollywood elite at the 2020 Golden Globe Awards.

Especially with the 100th anniversary of Abraham Kuyper’s death, it’s worth talking about Legutko’s observations in light of “sphere sovereignty” — the idea that people should have sovereignty in their rightful spheres of influence. But in communism and LD, the belief is that politics “should permeate every section of public and private life.” (20) And both “share their dislike, sometimes bordering on hatred, toward the same enemies: the Church and religion, the nation, classical metaphysics, moral conservatism, and the family.” (138) Under communism and LD, “political power becomes practically the sole organizing force” (133), so that no opposition is feasible. LD “has an overwhelming tendency to politicize and ideologize social life in all its aspects . . . hence, it is difficult for religion to find a place in a society where it would be free from the pressure” (166) — even if that was feasible or desirable.

What can oppose these damaging forces within democracy? Legutko argues that Christianity is probably “the last great force that offers a viable alternative to the tediousness of liberal-democratic anthropology,” (174) But beyond this, we can always have hope when the flaws of an idol are so obvious. (This is reminiscent of the characters in the TV show, “The Good Place” — who recognize that they cannot possibly be in “The Good Place,” given what they’re experiencing.) As such, we see considerable pushback among (true) liberals, a range of conservatives, and the vast bulk of the decidedly non-elite who are attacked by the tenets and practice of LD. ♦

The ERA, sexual equality, and gender issues

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(Feb. 1) — Gender issue have been in the news lately. The state of Illinois enacted a law in 2019 that requires baby changing stations in all rest rooms available for public use.

The law is especially helpful to fathers, the oft-overlooked parent, since many restrooms would have fathers change their baby's diapers on the counter near the sink, or on the floor of the bathroom, as unattractive as it sounds.

The Sunday, Jan. 19 edition of the New York Times had an article entitled, "Why Mothers' Choices Often Feel Like No Choice." Among the claims made in the article is that "many parents — particularly women — feel their decisions about work and family are made within such constraints that they have little choice at all," sort of like fathers looking for diaper-changing facilities. Is the New York Times claim correct?

The Pew Research Center reported in 2019, "Just like mothers, many of today's fathers find it challenging to balance work and family life. About half of working dads (52 percent) said in 2015 that it is very or somewhat difficult to do so, a slightly smaller share than the 60 percent of working mothers who said the same." Consigning men to the working world, where fathers' choices feel like no choice, will reduce the life span of men by about five years compared to women. The stress and pressure of job responsibilities contribute to the differential.

The Equal Rights Amendment passed in Virginia; the same edition of the Times had an article about the ERA; the article stressed equality for women. The words "male" and "men" appeared three times, combined. The word "father" was never used. On the other hand, the word "women" appeared 12 times; the

word "motherhood" appeared once. A person could conclude that the equal rights amendment is not so much about equality as it is about women.

And that's too bad. While changing stations for babies are commonplace in women's bathrooms, few states legally required changing stations for men. The history of custody of children in divorce cases still shows an imbalance, too. Mothers are the preferred parent, and this despite the fact that, as Pew Research Center reported in 2018, "17 percent of all stay-at-home parents in 2016 were fathers, up from 10 percent in 1989, the first year for which reliable data on fathers are available." And why on earth was reliable data on fathers available 25 years after the advent of the modern women's movement?¹

Perhaps men are more abusive than women with regard to children? Here are data: "In 2017, parents — acting alone or with another parent or individual — were responsible for 80.1 percent of child abuse or neglect fatalities.

More than one-quarter (30.5 percent) of fatalities were perpetrated by the mother acting alone, 15.5 percent were perpetrated by the father acting alone, and 20.2 percent were perpetrated by the mother and father acting together. Nonparents (including kin and child care providers, among others) were responsible for 15.2 percent of child fatalities, and child fatalities with unknown perpetrator relationship data accounted for 4.7 percent of the total."²

The idea that mothers alone need help and that fathers do not need help showed up in the last Democratic debate. As Peggy Noonan opined in the Jan. 18-19 Wall Street Journal, "The candidates were indignant that women can be held from the workforce by the high cost of childcare." She later said, "No one spoke with compassion for parents, for mothers who forgo the earnings and status . . . and relationships . . . of having a job to stay home with kids under age four."

The Jan. 4-5 Wall Street Journal prepared the way for Ms. Noonan's comments. It had an article entitled, "The Challenges That Working Mothers Still Face." The article listed a series of problems that men also face when they are working fathers.

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org-fact-tank-2018-09-24-stay-at-home-moms-and-dads-account-for-about-one-in-five-u-s-parents->

² <https://www.childwelfare.gov-pubPDFs-fatality.pdf>

The article listed problems I faced when I set my career aside in 1992. One special burden that men have rather than women is re-entry into the workforce: Men are not accorded equal respect and equal treatment when they set aside their careers for child-care responsibility. If parenting is understood to be for mothers and not fathers, fathers will always be viewed suspiciously when they take parental leave.

The lack of changing stations in men's rooms, the history of child custody decisions, and the widely held idea that men should work while women stay home with children teaches men that being a father is a matter of indifference — yet “strong” feminists blame men for not taking care of their children. Go figure.

If the Equal Rights Amendment does become law, maybe that will change, but I am not optimistic. How often have the media reported data unfriendly to men? For example, the Department of Education reported that “In fall 2017, female students made up 56 percent of total undergraduate enrollment (9.4 million students), and male students made up 44 percent (7.3 million students).” Is that datum widely reported? Where is the outcry about the inequality?³

Maybe we should be concerned about the imbalance in those who are homeless. HUD reported that in 2017, “Just under 61 percent of people experiencing homelessness (335,038 people) were men, and 39 percent (215,709 people) were women.” HUD added that “Gender varied by sheltered status. People staying in unsheltered locations were more likely to be men (71 percent), while people staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs were somewhat more likely to be women (55 percent).” Such data are rarely, if ever, found in media outlets.⁴

The first year enrollment in law school for 2019 was 54 percent female and 46 percent male, according to the American Bar Association. The American Association of Medical Colleges reports that 52.4 percent of people in medical school are women and

46.6 percent are men. Should those imbalances bother us? Do media report that kind of data?⁵

The New York Times on Dec. 1, 2019, published an article entitled “The Crisis in Youth Suicide.” The article states that “In October, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that after a stable period from 2000 to 2007, the rate of suicide among those aged 10 to 24 increased dramatically — by 56 percent — between 2007 and 2017, making suicide the second leading cause of death in this age group, following accidents like car crashes.”

What the article neglected to mention was data from the National Institute of Mental Health showing the discrepancy between males and females: the suicide rate per 100,000 children age 10-14 was one girl and three boys. For ages 11-24, the rates per 100,000 was five females and 22 males; 80 percent of youth suicides were boys or young men. Is that a pattern that should be mentioned in an article about youth suicide?⁷

While I have read about the alleged disproportionate suspension rate in public secondary and elementary schools between whites and blacks, I have yet to see an account in a popular publication about the disproportionate suspension rate between girls and boys. Here are the numbers from 2014 for out of school suspensions: 1,860,002 boys and 775,741 girls. For expulsion, the numbers are 82,787 boys and 28,428 girls. In 2017, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported in percentages: 7.25 percent of suspensions were boys and 3.20 percent were girls; for expulsion, .32 percent boys and .12 percent girls. What can Title IX mean given the data?⁸

And shouldn't the very clear pattern of who is expelled and who is suspended be reported?

The answer depends on the sex of the ox; inequality is important only when a female ox is gored. ♦

³ https://nces.ed.gov-programs-coe-indicator_cha.asp

⁴ <https://www.hudexchange.info-resources-documents-2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

⁵ https://www.americanbar.org-groups-legal_education-resources-statistics-

⁶ https://www.aamc.org-system-files-2019-11-2019_FACTS_Table_A-1.pdf

⁷ <https://www.nimh.nih.gov-health-statistics-suicide.shtml>

⁸ https://nces.ed.gov-programs-digest-d17-tables-dt17_233.30.asp

Useful Idiots On the Right: The Never-Trumpers

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(Jan. 17) — One could perhaps have excused them their earlier indiscretions of November 2016. He was, after all, an unknown quantity, an outsider of questionable conservative pedigree. Indeed, Donald Trump had been a fairly typical New York liberal Democrat for much of his life. And he had led a less than stellar moral life. And so the pile-on by the National Review and others could have been forgiven, although not really, when one considered the alternative. As I had written at the time:

“Do we not grow weary of the sanctimonious ones? The Never-Trumpers that endlessly hector and scold, and hold themselves up as paragons of moral virtue? They display their good taste by showing contempt for Trump and his supporters. Some of them claim they will vote down ballot, skipping the presidential slot, or vote for Evan what’s his name (McMullin). Some will write in a candidate or go Libertarian, neither of who will have any chance of winning. Other pious Republicans will even cast their vote for Hillary.”

But how much more compelling is the argument today, three years later, in light of the horrendous behavior of the Left, their naked will-to-power and demonic “rule or ruin” ethos? And what of Trump, his incredible and unexpected victory in 2016, and then his favorable performance as President and conservative standard-bearer? What accounts for the odd and self-immolating behavior of the Never-Trump crowd, most if not all of them former card carrying members of the right?

Never-Trumpers go under many labels including Globalists, Neo-Cons, “moderate”

Republicans, RINOs, Democrat-lites and the “GOP establishment.” Some of its better-known members include William Kristol, Mona Charen, the Koch brothers, John Podhoretz, Jeff Flake, Steve Schmidt, the Bushes, George Will, Bret Stephens, Mitt Romney, John Kasich, Gabriel Schoenfeld, Rick Wilson, David French and Max Boot.

Many Never-Trumpers, furthermore, are of Jewish persuasion, as am I, and supporters of Israel, also as am I. One would have thought that actions taken by the President, our modern-day Cyrus and defender of the Jews, would have persuaded them.

Perhaps it is that many of them, along with liberal associates, are part of what Angelo Codevilla describes as the “Ruling Class.” These are individuals in higher-level positions in government, academia, the media, think tanks, non-government organizations (NGOs), unions, non-profits, corporations and the courts. They compose an extra-constitutional elite system, operating outside of the usual democratic mechanisms that, in effect, run the country.

Members of the Ruling Class believe themselves of superior cultural, moral and intellectual temperament; they view with disdain the unwashed living in the vast swaths between the coasts over whom they feel entitled to rule. Although superficially embracing democracy, they prefer government by experts, or, as it may occur, judges, but reject the elected branches unless, of course, they deliver the proper outcome. They are, in other words, “Progressives.”

Ruling Class elites place great faith in the “New World Order,” “globalism,” and “world government.” International bodies such as the European Union, the United Nations and NATO are critical to their vision of the world. They abhor primitive “tribal” notions of nationhood such as love of country, its culture, heritage and national sovereignty. Appalled by “Brexit” and efforts by Trump to “build a wall,” they embrace open immigration and amnesty while spurning borders. Some advocate policies that can loosely be described as “invade the world, invite the world.”

They support “criminal justice reform,” single-payer healthcare and the Paris Climate Accord. They maintain that Europe is better than America. Many are not particularly fond of religion or Biblical values, in particular, Christianity. They are socially “liberal” or “libertarian” even when fiscally conservative. The Second Amendment repulses them.

It is a single class that includes Democrats and Republicans, but not exactly. The Democrats are the ranking members and Republicans are subordinate. Democrats enjoy prestige and power; their media organs are dominant; they have cultural gravitas. Republicans do not. They seek acceptance and recognition, but know that they serve at the pleasure of liberal superiors.

Republican members of the Ruling Class seek to preserve their lucrative media presence, affirmative pats on the head from leftist betters, and, of course, dinner invitations from liberal friends.

They do this by promoting certain foundational policies beloved by the left (particularly on immigration). In this particular era, however, they have found a far better meal ticket to ensure continued membership in this exclusive club: denouncing Trump and everything he stands for including those who voted for him.

Republican country clubbers recognize that Trump is, in effect, a giant middle finger from the “deplorables” to them and their liberal cocktail lounge comrades. Indeed, it is the failure of Republicans to enact policies that they fund-raise

and campaign on every election cycle (defending our borders, ending Obamacare, law and order) only to abandon them once ensconced in power. It is from the ranks of the second tier of the Ruling Class, of the cowering, pseudo-right aristocracy, that many if not most Never-Trumpers arise.

The so-called conservative, Holier than thou Never-Trump crowd cannot abide supporting Trump, or even keep from insulting him and his many followers in the most vicious ways. They must then recognize that they are complicit in a possible Hillary or Sanders presidency that will bring the nation to its knees.

Although an imperfect candidate, Trump is the only one that can prevent a likely 16-year Obama continuum that will alter the nation irreversibly. The moral and principled choice is to stop it by embracing Trump.

By failing to do so, Republican Never-Trumpers betray the nation and the conservative cause they claim to be a part of, and place themselves alongside the vile Left who actively seek to destroy the country.

We have long been burdened by what Lenin described as “useful idiots,” referring to leftist intellectuals in the West sympathetic to Marxist Socialism despite the abysmal failures and atrocities. Now we have our “useful idiots” on the pseudo-right in the form of the Never-Trumpers. These pearl-clutchers and malcontents, closet socialists and soft-progressives, are every bit as despicable as the leftist followers they once decried. They cover themselves in shame. ♦

Kuyper's 'Sphere Sovereignty'

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(Feb. 3) — This year, 2020, is the 100th anniversary of Abraham Kuyper's death. It would benefit us to reflect, re-emphasize and celebrate Kuyper's writings during this election year, specifically Kuyper's "Sphere Sovereignty" concept. Although it may not bring agreement, it can add clarity — the first step towards cooperation.

Reasonable people do not argue for the sake of arguing; they argue for the purpose of advancing discussions and clarity. Kuyper's Sphere Sovereignty is a useful tool to advance these discussions and promote rational political discourse during this turbulent political season where there are disagreements over the roles and goals of the government. It is this rational discourse in which Kuyper's writings can enlighten our thoughts and ideas.

Kuyper was a noted intellectual, theologian, journalist, politician and educator. He is considered the founder of the Free University of Amsterdam and gave its keynote speech in 1880 and served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands from 1901-1905. In 1898, Kuyper was invited and delivered the prestigious Stone Lectures at Princeton University, resulting in a later book "Lectures on Calvinism," which provided foundational insights to Worldview philosophy.¹ How can we utilize this election year "opportunity" to be winsome ambassadors with

strategies to strengthen and promote the adoption of values important to us?

Kuyper's key topic during this inaugural address at the opening of the Free University centered on Sphere Sovereignty. Kuyper began by asking what is sovereignty and went on to explain it was "the authority that has the right and the duty to exercise power to break all resistance to its will and to avenge such resistance"²

Kuyper believed there is absolute sovereignty over all spheres which rests in a Creator, but earthly sovereignty over individual spheres which should reside in the appointed individual or entity which reigns over that sphere.

Kuyper utilized the term "sphere" to describe key areas within human reach and influence that are discreet entities having boundaries and limits. He warned us clearly that without Sphere Sovereignty, we were at risk of being governed and controlled by an overbearing entity (the state), which infringed on the sovereignty of a sphere it should have limited to no authority. His comment was, "... without Sphere Sovereignty, the state's unlimited rule; disposing of persons, their life, their rights, their conscience and even their faith."³

Kuyper went on to describe some of the spheres which should be separate from state control, having their own sovereignty. These included 1) family, 2) personal liberties, 3) social activities, 4) science and 5) religion. He specifically noted that "... each of which obeys its own law of life, and each subject to its own head."⁴

Kuyper acknowledges these spheres have overlapping areas and intersect sometimes in significant ways. The ultimate authority of each individual sphere, however, should reside with the person-entity designated as the sovereign authority over that sphere. The loss of Sphere Sovereignty creates the inappropriate dominion of

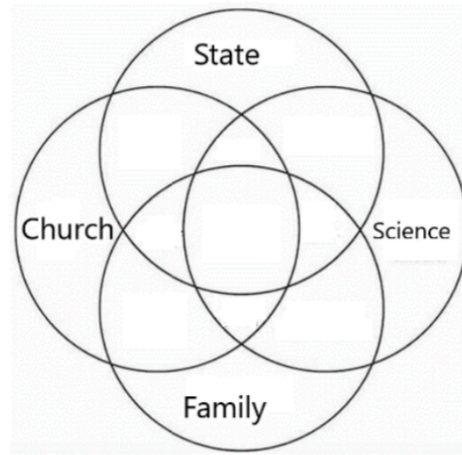
¹ Intro to Abraham Kuyper. Dr. David Naugle, Friday Symposium, Dallas Baptist University February 2, 2001, www3.dbu.edu-naugle-pdf-abraham_kuyper.pdf

² SPHERE SOVEREIGNTY (A public address delivered at the inauguration of the Free University, Oct. 20, 1880) by Dr. Abraham Kuyper. Translated by George Kamps.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

a person-entity over others. We can view these spheres like a Venn diagram and visualize the various entities in their individual spaces. If the State sphere's circumference grows with unchecked power and authority, it will begin impacting other spheres — many times in a negative fashion.



Kuyper's teachings provide the epistemological framework (origin and limits of human knowledge) for each of our metanarratives. That is the term used to describe each of our overarching accounts or interpretations of events and circumstances that provides a pattern or structure for our beliefs and gives meaning to our experiences in life. Our worldviews are the filters we use to evaluate life's experiences and determine if these experiences are good, bad, just, unjust, moral or immoral. Our worldview is created based on our metanarrative and encompasses all aspects of our existence. Our worldview therefore has profound influence on our individual lives as well as the lives within our reach.

This concept is crucial when considering our elected officials who will have sovereignty over the state sphere. Elected official's worldview reflects their metanarrative and ultimately influences the decisions they make or votes they take. Knowing and understanding their worldview and metanarrative will help each of us make better-informed electoral decisions.

Kuyper's view of history is also critical and how we, as individuals, view the present is significantly impacted by our understanding, acknowledgment and acceptance of historical facts and events. Complacency and our active denial of history and the allowance of negative historical revisionism opens the door to alter our perception of the present and the course for the future.

Political leaders who actively ignore or deny moral failures of the past create and invite an environment rife with poor choices personally and adverse policy decisions culturally. Moral relativism where ethical standards, morality and positions of right or wrong are culturally based and therefore subject to a person's individual choices or post-modernistic

thinking creates an environment allowing the state sphere to enlarge and strip us of individual liberties.

This is so when individuals in politics or the media reject the dogma, principles or practices of established norms and deny truth (scientific, arithmetical, geometrical, logical, analytic or moral). This problem is not only created by the state and politicians willing to garner more control but is significantly impacted by our individual actions, behaviors, complacency and loss of our historically based knowledge.

We can point to numerous areas in today's culture where we allow these behaviors and pervasive denial of truths to negatively impact Sphere Sovereignty and, by natural instinct, allow the state to rapidly expand its power and limit our liberties and freedoms.

From a science-educational sphere, trying to teach anything outside the dogmatic view of the theory of evolution or the controversies of climate change results immediately in challenges based on the agenda you are disrupting, i.e., "state-approved" pedagogical principles even though there is an abundant amount of evidence contrary to the radical agendas of the "Left." This has resulted in the state mandating what can and cannot be taught in schools and infringing on the Sphere Sovereignty of those in charge of the educational sphere, including parents and teachers. ♦

Redefining definitions such as marriage have created overreach by the state to mandate acknowledgment of unions that historically have never been defined or considered “marriage,” a word that describes the reality of a millennial of historical facts representing the relationship of a man and a woman from virtually every culture since recorded time. When we relinquish historical definitions of such terms we weaken or lose the Sphere Sovereignty of the characteristic family and what it represents. It allows the state to impart rights and benefits to some at the expense of others.

Allowing radical agendas to utilize historical revisionism and alter the perception about the founding principles of our country or the moral failures of the Holocaust creates a perception of the present based on false premises. It opens the door to a future with similar mistakes and policies. Relinquishing sovereignty in the sphere of history allows the state to create policies such as reparations and institute undue negative or positive bias towards certain groups of individuals, which is many times done by legislative or legal means.

In the sphere of science, we are witnessing a significant infringement in its sovereignty by the LGBTQ's radical agenda. Pushing their altered view of reality, where gender no longer exists in male-female and the scientific facts of X and Y chromosomes but rather in feelings, allows states and institutions across the country to mandate things such as men and women competing on opposite-sex sport's teams or mandating medical procedures we know are harmful and contrary to natural law. We've seen courts in Texas prohibit a Texas father from raising his son as a boy because his ex-wife allegedly decided their son is a

transgender girl and is preparing him for "chemical castration" and a future sex-change surgery, for which the father may be forced to help pay.⁵ We can only hope that regaining sphere sovereignty in the realm of science will alleviate some of these devastating policy and court decisions.

Finally, Kuyper's teaching directly relates to the concept of “Federalism,” both on a national level as well as a state level. How much or how little we want the “State Sphere” (federal or local) to control our lives, liberties, thoughts and actions will ultimately depend on how much we relinquish Sphere Sovereignty. Appropriately maintaining the reach of the state and defining the limits of its sovereignty, where its power and authority is allocated, will limit the infringement into our lives and liberties.

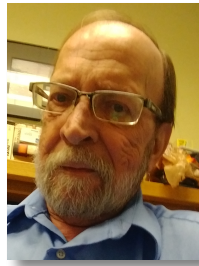
The challenge before us is to utilize Kuyper's Sphere Sovereignty teaching to understand and acknowledge when confusion or infringement of the spheres occurs and thereby open up rational discourse to delineate and define the control of the sphere.

The goal before us is to delegate only that power to the state within its sphere control, that and share power in areas of overlap between the spheres. As civically minded citizens, we need to strategically revisit the teachings of Kuyper, reinvigorate the conservative base and boldly live out our worldview based on the metanarrative. There are absolute objective truths, there are moral laws and standards, and they can be known. Complacency will be the downfall of Sphere Sovereignty and with it our personal freedoms and liberties. ♦

⁵ Mom Dresses Six-Year-Old Son As Girl, Threatens Dad With Losing His Son For Disagreeing. The Federalist. Walt Heyer, November 26, 2018; <https://thefederalist.com-2018-11-26-mom-dresses-six-year-old-son-girl-threatens-dad-losing-son-disagreeing->

Leo Morris

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Goodbye Buttigieg, Hello Milwaukee

(March 2) — Now that our favorite ex-mayor is dropping out of the running, the question can finally be asked:

How in the world could reddest of red states, Indiana, nestled in the heart of corn-growing, meatloaf-eating, thank-goodness-it's-beer-frame-bowling-night middle America, spawn a quasi-Socialist like Pete Buttigieg and propel him to national prominence as a Democratic presidential contender?

We'll get back to that. I promise.

But first, a few words from Hoosier political observers on the state's presidential primary: Whine, whine, whine.

It's too laaate in the process. It's irrelevant. The whole thing's over by then. We don't matter, boo hoo! Let's move it back from May to March, or even February.

How quickly we forget.

It was just back in 2008 when Democrats Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama were still duking it out as they got to our primary. Remember all those famous people who stopped by to awe the rubes, and all that wonderful cash that flowed into campaign ads?

Hillary even won. She barely eked out a victory, true. It wasn't quite the knockout she'd hoped for, but it was enough for her to limp on for a while.

And it was a mere four years ago when Ted Cruz still hoped to turn things around here and get his second wind (or was it third or fourth?)

against the Donald Trump juggernaut. It was, in fact, losing in Indiana that finally persuaded him to call it quits.

So there you have it, two possible roles Indiana could play in its May 5 primary. The sadistic dispenser of false hope or the vicious crusher of dreams.

Some of us, however, might be (not so) secretly hoping for the following scenario.

The Democratic field is a muddled mess by the time the campaigns roll into Indiana, with nobody close enough to the 1,991 delegates needed for a win to take a victory lap; Hoosier voters gleefully add to the confusion by refusing to add to the front-runner's count.

Partly as a result of Hoosier mischief, Democrats must head to the convention in Milwaukee with no chosen candidate. There will be at least three contenders with a shot at the nomination, so there will be floor fights, backroom intrigue, deals cut and promises made, coercion, blackmail, breathless analysis by blow-dried airheads.

Meanwhile, there will be violence in the streets, and the Democratic mayor will send out heavily armed riot police and . . .

. . . Sorry, little 1968 flashback there.

Unfortunately, another outcome is also possible. Someone — oh, say Bernie Sanders — could have the nomination all but sewn up by Indiana and Hoosier voters could go, oh, what the hey, and go with the winner.

Do you doubt it? Can't happen here, you say?

Remember that 2016 say-goodbye-to-Ted GOP primary? It wasn't paid that much attention to at the time, but there was a contest on the other side, too.

And Hillary did not win that one. In fact, she lost by a whole lot of votes more than she had won by in 2008.

To Bernie Sanders.

Getting back to Buttigieg (told you I would), do you suppose he ran to his Marxist professor father (yes he was, you can look it up) and said, "Daddy,

daddy, you won't believe it – Bernie Sanders just won the Indiana primary”?

“That rightwing wacko?”

Ah, well.

Those who profess moderation in all things political are fond of reminding Hoosiers that Indiana once ceded so much power to the Ku Klux Klan that that evil organization practically ran the state. Heh, heh, heh.

I will remind them that Indiana was also home to the failed socialist experiment known as New Harmony.

Heh, heh, heh.

Indiana's History with the Flu

(Feb. 24) — A few years after my 1983 move to Fort Wayne, I was sitting in a restaurant on the south side of town when the dishes on all the tables rattled, as if the floor had suddenly shifted beneath us. The next day, I read that a 5-point-something earthquake had hit the seismic zone between Indiana and Illinois in the Wabash River Valley. It was called a “moderate” earthquake, and we were far from the epicenter, but still . . .

Little bit scary.

I feel a bit like that today as panic about a worldwide pandemic trickles slowly into Indiana from the Chinese epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak.

A Hoosier couple was on that endless cruise of the ship that virus-fearing country after country turned away.

An Indiana resident is being “monitored” after a trip to China. Two Hmong men say they were discriminated against at two motels in Plymouth because they “looked Chinese.” A northwest Indiana couple self-quarantined after traveling to China.

It is tempting to dismiss the coverage as overzealousness by a press that doesn't want the state to miss out on the vicarious hysteria being enjoyed by the rest of the country.

These are the same people, after all, who urge panic over a few vaping deaths when cigarettes kill tens of thousands, who scare us over airline

crashes when deadly automobile collisions are far more likely, who make us think “We're all going to die!” because of alar on apples.

Just, you know, look at the flu. While we're stressing out over a relatively few coronavirus deaths outside of mainland China, the flu kills more than half a million people a year, about 60,000 of them in the U.S. alone.

But that is a faulty comparison.

The flu has been here for a long time, so we know a lot about how it operates. Millions get it every year, but the mortality rate is less than 1 percent. The coronavirus is so new that we're still learning what makes it tick, including what its rate of death is. I've seen estimates ranging from 2 percent to 20 percent. And it seems to be communicable before symptoms are apparent.

It's a statistically safe bet that the feared epidemic won't materialize. Most don't actually come about.

But some do.

Just look at, well, you know, the flu.

The 1918 Spanish Influenza epidemic, near the end of World War I, was as deadly as the war itself. I've seen estimates of 20 to 40 million dead, and Smithsonian magazine puts the total even higher, between 50 and 100 million. Affecting mostly otherwise healthy young adults, rather than most strains that kill mostly children and the elderly, it was thought to have spread so quickly because of crowding in military camps.

About 675,000 Americans died, but fewer than 4,000 of them were in Indiana, and the rate of flu deaths in Indianapolis was just 290 per 100,000 population, one of the lowest in the nation. Historians say two reasons were health officials' thoroughness in confronting the disease, and the media's willingness to publicize the efforts.

The virus was called the “Spanish” flu because the countries fighting World War I, including the U.S. and most in Europe, did not want to sow fear or admit a weakness to the enemy, so the disease spread in relative secrecy. Spain, being neutral, did not suppress its flu news, so got the reputation of being hardest hit.

But here in Indiana, the word went out.

The State Board of Health ordered local officials to close all schools, churches and theaters. All meetings except for small committees were forbidden. Stores were forbidden to have sales.

Imagine such an order going out today.

Somewhere between paralyzing panic and self-defeating indifference, there is a common sense approach that says, let's wait and see and consider the evidence as it comes in. So, until we know more, let's allow public health officials to do their thing and even give the media a pass, however grudgingly.

The Insult of Not Being a So-and-So

(Feb. 17) — You're a Hoosier.

That's not the biggest insult that can be hurled at us, to humble us with who we are.

Apparently, to cut us to the quick, you have to sneer at who we are not.

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden got into the name-calling recently. Feeling former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg nipping at his heels, he mocked the Indiana native's experience as a small-city executive and declared that, "This guy's not a Barack Obama."

How horrifying it must have been for Mayor Pete. Think of it, going through life thinking you're someone and then being rudely told it was merely an illusion. And he wasn't just not Barack Obama. He wasn't even "a" Barack Obama.

The shock must have been similar to that felt by fellow Hoosier Dan Quayle, vice presidential candidate on the Republican ticket, on being viciously cut down by debate opponent Lloyd Bentsen with the malicious taunt, "Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy."

Poor Dan. He couldn't even hint that Bentsen might be mistaken, since the Democrat had prefaced his put-down with, "I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine."

How could he contradict someone who knew so well the person he said Quayle was not? What was he going to say? You don't know Jack?

I think there must be a good column somewhere in that notion that Hoosiers are so crippled by delusions of grandeur that we must have it constantly and patiently explained to us that we are not who we might think we are.

But I imagine running the idea by my editor and it not going very well.

"You want to do a whole column about two politicians being insulted in the same way?"

"Yeah, funny stuff, huh?"

"Isn't your premise a little thin?"

"What?"

"It's a one-joke column. Where you gonna go with it? Gov. Holcomb is no Otis Bowen? Senators Braun and Young are no Evan Bayh and Dick Lugar? Attorney General Curtis Hill is no Perry Mason?"

"Use your imagination and think beyond politics. Hoagy Carmichael is no George Gershwin. Shelley Long is no Meryl Streep. James Whitcomb Riley is no Robert Frost."

"It's still the same joke over and over again. And, well, that's the other problem. Face it, you're no Art Buchwald."

"Who?"

"Oh, come on. Pulitzer Prize-winning humor columnist. Made a whole career of writing sarcastic parodies of politicians."

"That supposed to be an insult? Nobody even remembers Art Buchwald."

"OK, you're no George Will."

"I don't even like George Will anymore, since his pathological loathing of Donald Trump has eaten away his brain and left him a drooling idiot. How can you insult me by saying I'm not somebody I wouldn't ever want to be?"

At this point, I can picture my editor's wife interrupting us to ask what is going on.

"He is trying to talk me out of something he thinks I can't handle."

“Take what he says with a grain of salt. He’s no Dr. Phil.”

‘Well, you’re no Oprah.’

Now I feel derailed, my delight at the original premise being smothered by my anguish over who I would most like not to be.

As a writer, I should hope to be insulted by being reminded that I am no Mark Twain or Shakespeare. But perhaps I should restrain my ego. I could be not Joseph Heller or Jack Kerouac.

I toyed with the idea of being a stand-up comedian at one time. I could have been not Jerry Seinfeld. And I write a song or two occasionally. I could still be the next not Bob Dylan, although people who have heard me say I’m not even a good not Donavan.

Who would you like most not to be?

Wish I had a brilliant way to end this with an unexpected twist or the perfect ironic surprise.

Alas, I am no O. Henry.

The ‘In-betweeners’

(Feb. 10) — How about those kids today, huh?

Don’t ask members of the Indiana General Assembly. They’re still trying to figure it out. In every legislative session, issues come up that the most astute observers had not anticipated. This time around, there seem to be a lot of proposals involving young people that weren’t on anyone’s radar. Lawmakers have suggested, among other things:

Allowing 16-year-olds to vote.

Increasing the age at which Hoosier youngsters may marry from 15 to 18, 17 in some circumstances.

Increasing the smoking and vaping age from 18 to 21 and increasing the penalties for selling to those younger than 21.

Lowering from 14 to 13 the age at which children accused of certain crimes can be tried in adult court.

Raising from 18 to 21 the age at which Hoosier youths may buy rifles (the age that they must already be to buy handguns).

Requiring children to wear safety helmets when riding bicycles, skateboards and non-motorized scooters.

Preventing sex crime victims under the age of 16 from having to give pre-trial depositions.

Allowing children with mental health issues to have five days of psychiatric consultation instead of two or three.

If some or all of these initiatives were to pass, it wouldn’t add much clarity to existing state statutes, which already hold that the youth of Indiana can sue somebody at age 14 and buy life insurance at 16, vote at 18 but not drink until 21. They can stay on their parents’ insurance until they’re 26, but give a former president the credit (or blame) for that.

With an exception or two, the proposals reflect Indiana lawmakers’ struggles with the vague phenomenon known as “the teen years,” that period of transition when young people are no longer quite children and not yet quite adults. Where along that continuum do they become less of one and more of the other, and how should the law respond?

It’s pretty much a modern problem, since the very concept of “teenager” didn’t come along until several years into the 20th century.

Before that, there were boys and girls, who were at home on the family farm or working in the family business, and grownups, who left home and started their own families. There might have been a few days or a week or two in between, when Junior sat down with Dad to discuss the way of the world and Mom told Little Missy she was ready for marriage, but there was little transition period, certainly not one lasting for seven years.

Then, several things happened. The push for universal education brought us high schools, which took kids out of the home environment for four years and allowed them to create their own culture. Increasing affluence gave them money to spend. And the automobile gave them mobility and independence.

Suddenly there sprang up a whole new category of human being not seen before, and the world hasn’t been the same.

As a society, we are torn between infantilizing these in-betweeners, letting them extend their childhoods forever, and putting them in charge, setting the trends adults slavishly follow and giving us lectures on everything from gun control to climate change. The Indiana legislature seems to awhile wallow in the confusion.

Logic tells us that no two teens are alike. Some are mature enough at 13 to take on the most complex adult issue. And some will never grow up no matter how old they are.

But common sense says that we can't stop and take every individual situation into account. The law must make an arbitrary distinction.

The age of 18 seems like a good one. It's considered the age of majority in most states, and it's the age when a young person can join the military without parental consent. There's a certain ring of truth to the argument that "if they're old enough to die for their country, they're old enough to (fill in the blank)."

Take that as a friendly suggestion, General Assembly. Make 18 the dividing line, the age at which Hoosier youth enter adulthood with all its privileges and obligations.

But make them wear safety helmets on skateboards. Can't be too careful.

A Life Well Done

(Feb. 3) — Bob Vollmer is my new hero.

He is retiring from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources because, he says, his body is telling him it's time to go. His job requires a lot of physical effort: "I mean, climb the hills, fight the elements in the woods," he told NPR. "It's pretty rough, being tangled in vines, poison ivy, all kinds of things that you really have to be careful with, you know. I've worn my legs out."

He's 102. That makes him not just the oldest state employee, but the oldest in Indiana's history.

Bet he's had to put up with a lot of fool questions over the years from people wondering why he stayed around so long. I can relate. I hung it up a couple of years ago, nowhere near the

record set by Vollmer but still after the "official retirement date" had come and gone.

My brother, who had retired early from his computer career to write science fiction novels, thought I was being foolish. My sister, who had come to loathe the political machinations of her workplace and was counting down the days, thought I was out of my mind.

Why did I cling to work?

It was certainly a fair question. I was in newspapers, after all, the most gravely ill component of the dying print industry. Just going to the office was becoming almost unbearably sad, always another empty desk, another desperate management plan to do more with fewer people.

The best answer I could come up with was that I was good at what I did and still enjoyed doing it. That was true but not quite the whole story, I realize now that I've had some time to think about it.

The first job I had with a regular paycheck was as an usher at the old Jefferson Theater, where the convention center in downtown Fort Wayne now stands, when I was a sophomore in high school. I still remember looking in awe at those pitiful few first-pay dollars clutched in my hand.

There are certain moments in life when you realize you have crossed an important threshold, taken a first step everyone has to take that it was now your turn for. Having money in my pocket that I had earned was such a moment for me.

It was winter, so the first thing I did was buy small Christmas presents for everyone in my family. They were the first presents that were truly from me – not pretend presents for which my parents had actually provided the money to purchase.

Work, I understood from that first paycheck, was my entry to the world beyond my childhood. It was my connection to other people, the way I would fit into the larger puzzle, the path I could choose to assert my autonomy and define its trajectory.

Work would give me purpose. I just had to determine what that purpose would be. Ironically,

it was that same year when a friend talked me into writing for our high school newspaper.

I had always written, something I turned to as a child confined too often indoors by bouts of asthma. I knew that writing would be a big part of my future, but had never considered what shape that future might take. But the minute I saw my byline on a silly, five-paragraph story (about a meeting of the Spanish Club) in the Central High School Spotlight, I was hooked.

I found my purpose. And then dedicated myself for more than 40 years to the mission of local newspapers to inform and entertain their readers and bind them together with a sense of community. That sense of community is fraying these days, and the death of newspapers is one of the reasons why. I think we will miss them when they are gone.

One of my favorite books is the very short “A Mathematician’s Apology” by G.H. Hardy. In it, he says there are two criteria to use when deciding on a choice for a life’s work.

The first is that it should make use of whatever skill or talent you are best at. Not what you can do better than a certain number of people – whatever it is, there will always be people better than you and worse than you. Do what you do better than you do anything else – then, the more you do it, the better you will become and the more you will love it.

The second is that it should have some worth in the overall scheme of things. It should matter to humanity that the job is done and done well. Then the work you do will fulfill you and have value for others.

That’s the rest of the story, then. I kept at my job because I liked it, I was good at it, and it mattered. I had a purpose.

I doubt if Bob Vollmer ever read that book or one like it. On the other hand, he could probably write it himself. I can see him on his last days at work, walking the hills, dodging vines and swatting mosquitoes and cursing the weak legs that finally gave out on him.

At his retirement dinner – they should give him the biggest one the state has ever seen – they

should forgo all the accolades and just tell him what he deserves to hear: Good job.

Rights and Privileges

(Jan. 27) — It is my right to say whatever I wish to you. I’m privileged to have this forum in which to do it. Get the difference?

A lot of people don’t get the difference and, unfortunately, many of them are legislators. Understanding the difference between rights and privileges is critical for citizens trying to live under the law in a free society, and far too many lawmakers spend most of their energy trying to blur the distinction between the two.

Consider a couple of proposals in our own little laboratory of democracy, the Indiana General Assembly.

Rep. Chris Campbell, D-Lafayette, wants to allow illegal (or, if you prefer, undocumented) immigrants to drive on the state’s roads and get insurance for their vehicles. Marion County Prosecutor Ryan Mears agrees, saying it is “not a legal issue” but a “human rights issue” and “a human dignity issue.”

Driving is a privilege, not a right. Those granted the privilege have met certain conditions, such as being a citizen of a certain age, and agree to abide by certain requirements, such as obeying the rules of the road. But Campbell and Mears want us to think of it as a right.

Sen. Mark Stoops, D-Bloomington, wants to require Hoosiers to provide “safe storage” for any guns in their homes, and Sen. Jack Sandlin, R-Indianapolis, wants to allow retired law enforcement officers to carry guns in schools.

Bearing arms is a right, not a privilege. It’s acknowledged in the Bill of Rights, and the Supreme Court has affirmed that it applies to individuals. Stoops and Sandlin want to water it down to a privilege, Stoops setting a condition for its granting and Sandlin granting one group an exercise of it not allowed other groups.

“Granting” is the key word here.

Rights are not conferred by anyone, and they cannot be taken away or altered by anyone. They

are inherent. Call them natural or God-given, depending on your metaphysical inclination, they belong to all of us equally, simply by virtue of the fact that we are human. Properly understood, the Constitution does not exist to give us our rights, but to protect the rights we are born with.

Privileges, on the other hand, do not belong to all. They are given to some and withheld from others. They are always conditional, subject to change or outright removal by those in authority controlling them. They are unequal by nature, some people always having more and some less. And often, a privilege involves actually taking something from one group and giving it to another.

It is, unfortunately, far too easy to get rights and privileges mixed up. Though rights exist outside government and privileges within them, the reality still is that rights cannot exist without government. For a right to be meaningful, someone with authority and power must both recognize and honor that right. There are no rights in an anarchy.

And there is the loophole our legislators use to happily mix and match rights and privileges, replacing one with the other however it suits them in a given case. Doing either is a way to increase legislators' sense of well-being. They have sworn to serve the public but know deep down that it needs the enlightened guidance only they can provide.

Eroding a right into a privilege opens the door for the bureaucrats and lawyers of the administrative state to add unfathomable nuances and incalculable exceptions to the maze of rules lesser mortals must navigate. Pretending a privilege is a right allows officials to pit group against group, elevating some groups to favored status and downgrading others to a lower class.

Either way, the individual citizen is diminished, which is the point.

I remember a phrase from the Army that will be familiar to anyone who has served in the military: Rank has its privilege. It was always uttered with the contempt that sprang from unrelieved cynicism. We all wore the same

uniform, followed the same regulations, had the same obligations. Except, of course, the officers who ignored the rules because they knew they could.

George Orwell said it most memorably. You remember: All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others. No way to run a republic.

The Super Majority Blues

(Jan. 20) — Republicans have such a strong grip on Indiana — holding the governor's office and super majorities in both legislative chambers — that it is difficult to see beyond the fact. It sometimes feels as though it must have always been so and always will be so.

A reminder: It's true that the Indiana Senate has been virtually an impregnable GOP fortress — Democrats last controlled it in the late 1970s. But the governor's office has changed parties often, and Democrats have been highly competitive for House seats. It was just back in 2010 when they last ran it, and if we go back to 1992 (the history covered by Ballotpedia), they've actually held it 15 times to the Republicans' 14.

It's not beyond the realm of possibility, then, that they could win the House again. And sometimes, in my darkest, most cynical mood — get ready to throw the apostate out of the congregation, fellow conservatives and libertarians — I wish they would.

I had one of those moods the other day when I started thinking about ideas Democrats have proposed in this General Assembly session. The vote for 16-year-olds. Recreational marijuana. Euthanasia. More gun control. Higher minimum wage.

It would perhaps be unfair to call these fringe ideas, but they certainly have no chance of passage in Indiana. Democrats certainly know this, so they must feel they have no choice. If they can't hope to achieve legislative success, why not just throw out the red meat their base wants to feast on?

It's not as noticeable, but Republicans aren't behaving all that well, either. They can do

whatever they please, and they make sure we know they know it. They're as likely as not to vote on a proposal we've heard nothing about that they have thoroughly mapped out in private meetings. That's the action of an exclusive club, not a political party held together by core beliefs and a coherent philosophy.

If Democrats were to win back the House, I can think of a couple of possible benefits.

The most obvious one is that Democrats would start proposing more sensible ideas. If they believe a proposal could actually result in a bill, they might start thinking more about what a majority of Hoosiers would tolerate, even, heaven forbid, welcome. They would, of necessity, have to woo support from across the aisle.

The other benefit – even more important – is that Republicans would have to actually defend their ideas, which they haven't seen the need to do in recent years. As someone who's made a living by arguing, I believe that would help them see the weaknesses in their proposals and result in stronger legislation.

Hoosier voters would be the ultimate beneficiaries. If they got more common sense from one side and more willingness to debate from the other, they would be more informed about their state government. They could hear facts from both sides about the (modest, incremental, sensible) changes proposed to the rules they must live by.

Ah, well.

Let me try to talk myself off the ledge before I get thrown off. If it's true that hard cases make bad law, it's also likely that dark moods beget foolishly idealistic hopes. My fantasy legislature would require more reasonableness from Republicans, highly doubtful, and less pious pondering from Democrats, almost inconceivable.

Democrats seeking the presidency, after all, are running against a Republican who was hated by half the country as a candidate and has had the most controversial incumbency in modern history. As more than one observer has noted, all they have to do to win back the White House is not sound crazy. And they can't even manage that.

Awash in Regulations

(Jan. 13) — Forget for a moment, if you can, what you think about the dangers of tobacco and the wisdom or folly of government trying to regulate its use. Consider, instead, how you think the laws dictating your conduct should be enacted.

Three examples to ponder:

The Fort Wayne City Council enacted two ordinances regulating public smoking, one in the late 1990s and a much more restrictive one in 2007. In both cases, there were numerous public hearings at which citizens from all sides of the issue made impassioned pleas, everyone from health advocates talking about the dangers of secondhand smoke to restaurant owners arguing the right to set the rules governing their private property.

The General Assembly passed the Indiana Smoke Free Air Law in 2012, after a years-long campaign during which mounting pressure for change gradually eroded a strong legislative commitment to the status quo. In the five years prior to the law, numerous study committees debated expert testimony from scores of witnesses and studies citing a dizzying array of statistics.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration officially changed the federal minimum age to buy all tobacco products from 18 to 21 on Dec. 20, 2019, the same day President Donald Trump signed a \$1.4 trillion spending package that included approval for the change.

What the first two examples have in common that the third does not share is that by the time the laws went into effect, those affected by them had been given every opportunity to know what the changes were, whether they agreed with them or not. They knew what was allowed and not allowed, and what the penalties were for not complying.

After the FDA's change, however, there was widespread confusion nationwide. The bill signed by Trump gave the FDA six months to change its policies and 90 days after the change to implement it. But it announced the change immediately, causing some retailers to think they

had to comply right away and others to think they still had time, though none knew how much.

To be fair, we should probably be grateful that at least there was specific legislative authorization for the change, even if it was inserted in a massive budget bill at the last minute with no discussion.

The FDA is one of many federal agencies benefiting from Congress' abdication of authority in giving them the power to set and adjudicated their own rules.

How many such agencies there are is not exactly known, but it was indicated in a 2015 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing that "there are over 430 departments, agencies, and sub-agencies in the federal government."

They employ, according to public policy analyst Chuck DeVore, "220,000 federal regulators working with a regulatory budget of about \$63 billion who write and enforce 185,000 pages of rules that cost the economy in the neighborhood of \$1.9 trillion annually."

From 1960 through 2017, the Federal Register of rules we must live by grew from 22,000 pages to 185,000: "As the United States was created, there were some half-dozen federal laws such as treason and counterfeiting that could send you to prison.

Now, violate any one of the estimated 300,000 rules — even if you're completely unaware of the rule — and you may be sent to the federal slammer.

Perhaps your feelings about tobacco are too strong for you to separate what is done from how it is done. But substitute any activity some faceless functionary could define as a danger to you, someone else or any part of the organic or inorganic landscape deemed too fragile to survive without bureaucratic intervention. Drinking. Riding a bicycle or operating a crane. Buying flowers on the Internet or draining a pond on your farm. Walking one the sidewalk while chewing gum.

If you're breaking some rule and doing it wrong, wouldn't you like to know about it ahead of time instead of when you're punished for it?

"Ignorance of the law" might still not be an excuse. But we should not accept it being the government's clear intention.

What's Ahead in 2020

(*Jan. 6*) — Another year gone, another reset of the calendar, which means it is time to take stock of where we've been and where we're going.

The usual changeover rituals are too limited in one way or another. "Top 10" lists usually consider only the best or worst of the 12 months just gone by. New-year's-resolution exercises consider only the personal failings we hope to correct in the coming 12 months. We need to occasionally step back and take a longer and more expansive view.

So, here are two different takes on where the world might be headed. Take your pick.

The pessimistic view:

"2019 may well go down as the most disrupted year in global politics since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent implosion of the former Soviet Union.

"However, the likelihood is that 2020 will be worse, and bloodier.

"Conditions that spawned global unrest on every continent in 2019 are unlikely to recede. Rather, they are likely to worsen in the face of a slowing global economy and little sign of causes of disaffection being addressed.

"In a word, the world is in a mess, made more threatening by the retreat of the Trump administration from America's traditional role as a stabilizing force."

— theconversation.com

The optimistic view:

"In the long arc of human history, 2019 has been the best year ever.

"The bad things that you fret about are true. But it's also true that since modern humans emerged about 200,000 years ago, 2019 was probably the year in which children were least likely to die, adults were least likely to be illiterate and people were least likely to suffer excruciating and disfiguring diseases. Every single day in

recent years, another 325,000 people got their first access to electricity.

“Each day, more than 200,000 got piped water for the first time. And some 650,000 went online for the first time, every single day. Perhaps the greatest calamity for anyone is to lose a child. That used to be common: Historically, almost half of all humans died in childhood. As recently as 1950, 27 percent of all children still died by age 15. Now that figure has dropped to about 4 percent.”

— Nicolas Kristof, *The New York Times*

If you choose to dwell on the negative view, the article gives you plenty of material to obsess about: trade conflicts, technology wars, fears of globalization, income inequality, the pervasive corruption of tyrannical governments, violent protests, the growth of megacities and resultant urban ills like poverty, gang conflict and drug trafficking. The list of horrors would not be complete without “unrest over climate change” and the perception that government is “indifferent to climate concerns.”

If you want to focus on the positive, Kristof asks you to forget your gloom for a nanosecond and “to note what historians may eventually see as the most important trend in the world in the early 21st century: our progress toward elimination of hideous diseases, illiteracy and the most extreme poverty.”

The two views are not mutually exclusive, of course. You can acknowledge all the bad things in the world but still understand that things are getting much better overall. And it is possible to overemphasize one view or the other.

If we are too optimistic, we risk the sin of indifference, overlooking obvious problems that need immediate attention. If we are too pessimistic, we don’t recognize solutions that will provide even more good results if we keep applying them.

But our default – the baseline premise from which we choose to operate – matters.

We like to think we are neutral, looking at every situation with detachment until all the evidence is in. But mostly we’re not. We start either from the assumption that the best will

happen unless the evidence shows us otherwise or the assumption that the facts must prove to us that we’re not in for the worst.

What you see depends on where you stand. No one can decide that for you.

A Routine, Helpful Police Encounter

(*Dec. 30*) — To the Fort Wayne police officer who stopped me on Bluffton Road the Saturday before Christmas: A belated thank you. I wish I had thought to say it at the time.

It’s not that I was belligerent, the way some drivers are when they get pulled over. I wasn’t rude or impatient, nervous or defensive. I remained relatively calm and, if I may say so, perfectly polite.

And you were not obnoxious, the way some people with unquestionable authority can be. You didn’t bully or lecture me, treat me like a backward child or potential lunatic. You were informative in a reasonable, deliberate way, a consummate professional.

It was, in fact, an unremarkable encounter on an ordinary day. That alone was reason to be thankful, given that we were in the kind of situation we’ve always been told could have gone so wrong in so many ways.

But there was more. You provided me with a valuable service, a fact I didn’t fully appreciate till about half an hour later and several miles down the road. What happened then was that the sun came up, mocking me with its obvious arrival.

I have one of those cars with many automatic systems, which I guess makes it a smart car. It figures out when to do things so the driver doesn’t have to worry about them.

The windshield wipers stay still or move depending on the absence or presence of precipitation. The climate control system measures the outside temperature and knows whether to turn on the heater or air-conditioning.

And the lights have a life of their own as well, sensing daytime or nighttime and staying dormant or self-activating as the situation dictates.

Ah, but the driver still must be smarter than his car.

For the lights to work automatically, the selector switch must be set to automatic. If the driver bumps the switch or inadvertently moves it when he thinks he's doing something else, then the car will be as stupid as the driver.

Which is why I was driving without lights in the pre-dawn Saturday.

There was enough ambient light that I didn't even notice. But you did. You were right behind me and could see that my tail lights weren't working, so you pulled me over. And set me straight, and sent me on my way, the car brightly announcing its path for all to behold.

Without your intervention, I would have been a moving target for that half-hour before dawn. I don't want to sound dramatic and say you might have saved my life, but you certainly reduced the odds of my name appearing in an official crash report.

You did a little bit of serving and protecting by being smarter than both the car and its driver.

I know that the primary function of the police is to uphold the law. You monitor our behavior and take the appropriate measures if we cross the line. But there has been considerable discussion of late about the question of whether it is possible or appropriate for certain police activities to actually prevent crime rather than merely responding to it.

That's too big a debate to tackle in this short space.

And I won't push the point that your mere presence makes us safer, though I know it is so. You are a symbol of our commitment to set limits and to try to live by them. Trying to imagine your absence is to think we can have a civilization without respecting its mores and customs.

The point I want to make is narrower, on a smaller playing field where rules of the road are a microcosm of the law of the land. We accept the rules when we get on the road, and it's your job to make us honor them.

You and your colleagues are frequently and justly praised for being first responders, the ones

who get to emergencies before anyone else. But surely your most valuable service is that of pre-responder, taking actions that can prevent emergencies from happening at all.

So, thank you. And may all your traffic stops be unremarkable encounters on ordinary days.

Advice for a New Superintendent

(Dec. 23) — I'm such a cynic sometimes. The superintendent of our school district is retiring, and local education officials are making a big deal about considering public input in the naming of her replacement. I hate myself for it, but I find myself doubting their sincerity.

For one thing, they're using a prestigious firm to conduct a nationwide search, which means they're already pretty sure of what they want, and for another, they're convening a lot of focus groups, which can usually be counted on to say what conveners want to hear. They're also throwing the word "transparency" around like it's the attack dog that will grab any stray criticism by the throat and fling it to the ground.

It seems as if they know they're supposed to be doing this in the public's interest, but their hearts really aren't in it.

But I will take them at their word and offer my input. I don't have children in the district but I am one of its taxpayers, so I have a stake in the process. Alas, that makes me a "stakeholder," which is another weasel word officials use to gull citizens into thinking they have more say than they actually do. (And if they ever start saying "synergy," there should be an immediate investigation, because that's an obvious signal somebody is up to no good.)

So, for what it's worth, our new school superintendent should:

Be Local — Enough damage has been done by the roving band of professional educators who travel the country armed with the latest fads in pedagogy but have no knowledge of the special challenges and opportunities that make up local conditions. If the school board doesn't already have a good crop of candidates from which to

select a good candidate, it's doing something wrong.

Put Students First — That means giving them the best education possible, wherever it is being offered. Instead of fighting initiatives such as vouchers and charter schools, the top public education official should welcome them as competitors that spur excellence. Local school districts are allowed to start their own charters, and they should be the concept's biggest advocates. It's a shame they aren't.

Stress Basics —The knowledge base is expanding exponentially. The more there is to wade through, the more important it is for students to have a strong baseline that will help them comprehend it all. Reading, writing and arithmetic aren't throwbacks to a simpler age. They're needed now more than ever.

Teach Citizenship — Schools are ill-equipped to be a student's sole gateway to the workplace, and they should not in any case be pushing teens and even pre-teens to quickly decide their lifelong career paths. But they are uniquely qualified to help our young people appreciate the Western values and American traditions they have inherited and should nurture and pass along.

Strive For Excellence — Stop holding back the best and brightest students — set high standards, in fact, and hold all students accountable for trying to meet them. Not only disdain the trend of abandoning the naming of valedictorians and salutatorians, dedicate one of those charter schools to honors classes that it becomes a point of pride to qualify for.

Let Teachers Teach —Start taking away responsibilities that unnecessarily burden them. Cut back on the bloated administration to put more bodies in the classroom and pay them better. Stand up for them against half-baked schemes from legislative busybodies.

Deemphasize Diversity —Nothing wrong with valuing our differences, but we've elevated our commitment to them to a pathological level. We should be paying much more attention to the things we have in common, and if schools don't do it, it won't get done.

Looking back on this partial list — shortened for the sake of brevity — it occurs to me why it won't be taken seriously. It's not just a wish list, it's actually a catalog of the things that are wrong with public education today.

That means it can't be achieved by one person, even if he or she were inclined to tackle it. The problem is that we all have a stake in education, but we no longer agree, if we ever did, on what its goals should be, let alone how to achieve them. We need to really think about that.

I have one suggestion on where we might start. Indiana schools have put so much emphasis on standardized tests that they're becoming all teachers can focus on and all students can worry about. They have started overshadowing everything else in public education.

But Indiana University has just announced it will give potential enrollees the option of not including standardized test scores on their college applications.

There is one huge disconnect there. Maybe our new superintendent can figure out why.

A Top-10 Hoax

(Dec. 9) — In the spirit of Paul Harvey's "The Rest of the Story" radio segments.

Let's call this the bestseller that never was, adapted from author J. Mark Powell's version of the incident.

"Shep" (that's how he referred to himself) was born and raised in Indiana but after serving in World War II had a radio career in Ohio before becoming the overnight voice of WOR in New York City.

Broadcasting in the 1950s was in a period of transition. Television had killed off the golden age of radio. The old medium had lost its way, and the new medium was still finding its way. The time was ripe for something new to be done with radio, and Shep a gifted story teller and master of sarcastic wit was the perfect broadcaster to do it.

He just talked to his audience, whom he called his Night People, and invited them to call in and

talk to him. It was more or less the beginning of what we now call talk radio.

New York City in the 1950s, Shep observed, was big on Top 10 lists – 10 best restaurants, well-dressed women, hot new trends and on and on. Chief among them was the New York Time’s bestseller list. At that time, it wasn’t just sales that put a book on the list – customer requests for a book and questions about it were among the criteria.

Shep the cynic believed people were so influenced by such lists that they didn’t even bother to think for themselves, and he ranted on the air one night that if enough people requested a book that didn’t even exist, it would make the bestseller list.

His Night People responded with glee and in the spring of 1956 helped Shep create what some would later call the hoax of the century. Based on audience suggestions, he came up with a name for a nonexistent novel – “I, Libertine” – and invented an author, Frederick R. Ewing, a retired British military officer and scholar who lived with his wife Marjorie on their English country estate.

The Night People went to work, bombarding bookstores with requests for the novel and talking it up in various social circles, and reporting the hilarious effects on air. One listener reported a particularly snooty clerk responded to the query with, “Frederick R. Ewing? It’s about time people began noticing his work.” Another related that members of her bridge club said they had read it, and then proceeded to argue over which chapters they liked and those they didn’t. A third, a college student, wrote a lengthy term paper on “F.R. Ewing: Eclectic Historian” and got a B+.

Requests for “I, Libertine” started coming in from London, Paris, Rome and West Germany. And, in the crowning success of the hoax, a church congregation in Massachusetts condemned it.

And in the summer of 1956, the book that did not exist made the New York Times bestseller list – and then began to move up on it. A literary gossip columnist wrote in a leading newspaper, “Had a delightful lunch the other day with

Frederick R. Ewing and his charming wife, Marjorie.”

The book might have gone all the way to No. 1. But Shep and his good friend Ted, having a good laugh over the hoax at lunch one day, decided it was time to fess up and, just for laughs, write the book for real. The Wall Street Journal broke the story (though it hadn’t exactly been a national secret) just weeks before the book came out, written by Ted, with a disreputable looking Shep posing on the back cover as author Ewing.

And, yes, that book, the real one, also made the bestseller list. (All profits went to charity.) Today, you can still buy “I, Libertine” on Amazon.com. You can also read many other works by Ted – noted science fiction author Theodore Sturgeon.

And you will probably watch the film version of the master hoaxer’s most famous work on television for the 10th or 20th time – Hoosier humorist Jean Shepherd’s “A Christmas Story.” And imagine him on the radio – that’s his voice doing the narration.

So now you know yada, yada, yada.*

*Among those influenced by Shepherd is Jerry Seinfeld, who has said, “He really formed my entire comedic sensibility—I learned how to do comedy from Jean Shepherd.”

The ‘Smartest’ State?

(Dec. 2) — When I was in high school, we all knew who the smart kids were. They were the ones who had the most answers, solved problems the quickest, scored the highest on tests.

I suspect nothing’s changed. Go into any high school today, pick out any student at random to ask, and you’ll discover who the smartest ones in that school are. You won’t need a battery of state-mandated tests or psychologist-approved yardsticks.

It was, admittedly, a little easier in my day. Back then, our schools were “laned” so that students of roughly equivalent academic abilities had their classes together as a group.

Fort Wayne high schools had five lanes – x1, x2, y1, y2 and z. School could be a wonderful

intellectual adventure for those in the x lanes – we were the best and brightest and were told so all the time. We never stopped to consider how school must have seemed for those in the z lane who constantly got the message they were the dumbest and slowest.

Of course, I know now. Have you ever heard that question about whether it's better to have the worst house in the best neighborhood or the best house in the worst neighborhood? Just think about whether you'd rather be the worst student in the top lane or the best student in the bottom lane.

I've thought a lot since high school about the kids we defined as the smartest and whether they really deserved that designation.

They were, I've come to understand, those for whom school was the easiest. They were in a closed, structured environment, clearly understood the rules of that environment, and followed those rules to achieve success as defined by the standards of that environment. Is that really what it means to be smart?

When I think of all the smart people in history I wish I could have a conversation with, two names among the top are Hedy Lamarr and Ben Franklin.

Lamarr was a huge Hollywood star of the 1940s, routinely called the most glamorous woman in the world – she was the Angelia Jolie of her day, and then some. That brought with it the sleazy attentions of predatory moguls in a culture of sexism so toxic we can barely imagine it today.

Yet, she used her creative ability to invent a frequency hopping technology, a way of jumping around on radio frequencies that could keep the enemy from interfering with a ship's torpedoes. That invention led to the Wi-Fi, GPS and Bluetooth that are now propelling the digital age.

Franklin was easily the most debauched of America's Founding Fathers. A hard drinker, womanizer, vain, bawdy, vulgarian pursuer of life's excesses. As a joke, he once wrote an essay on how to improve the odor of human flatulence.

Yet, he was an inventor without equal, eloquent writer, brilliant statesman. He helped

write both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Even among the members of the Constitutional Convention, arguably the greatest collection of intellectuals ever gathered in one place, he stood out as a genius.

That's what being smart is: If, despite all the obstacles in your path, whether put there by society's demands or your own character flaws, you still achieve the best you are capable of.

I started thinking about all this when I encountered another silly article about the Hoosier state's pitiful showing in one of those artificial categories lame websites trot out periodically to rank states in.

"Indiana ranks toward bottom of 'smartest states' study," the headline said. We came in at No. 38 out of 51 (Washington, D.C., was included), so best forget those plans for a "My state is smarter than your state" bumper sticker. I feel even more chagrined that my birth state of Kentucky fared worse – in the bottom 10.

But perhaps I should try to think of myself as the smartest citizen in the dumbest states.

We lane everything these days, put every person, place and thing into boxes with their respective counterparts and sort them and rank them and reduce them to their simplest components.

But they are closed environments. The "best" within those environments means something only by the rules set for them.

This particular smart list was created by considering the number of people with college degrees, the percentages of high school graduates and student scores on the SAT and ACT. Basically, a state's smarts-level is determined by education levels.

A bit narrow, especially considering the state of education in America today.

The smartest state by the selected criteria? New Jersey, which also usually tops the list of states with the highest taxes. If such lists were kept, the state would undoubtedly be ranked first in corruption as well. We can only conclude that the smartest state is being run by the dumbest people in the state. Certainly not by any Hedy

Lamarrs or Ben Franklins who might still be trapped there.

Texas Has it Right

“No man’s life, liberty or property are safe while the Legislature is in session.” – Gideon J. Tucker, 1866

(Nov. 25) — I just visited my brother in Texas. Let me tell you a little about that state.

It is so big that it could encompass Indiana and 12 other states with plenty of room left over. The area of Houston alone is roughly the size of Connecticut.

It has 17 metropolitan areas of 200,000 population or more, three different climates and four defined areas with distinct geographical features.

If Texas were a country, it would control the world’s 18th-largest economy.

The latest two-year budget for the government of Texas is \$217 billion, more than six times that of Indiana’s \$34 billion.

But with all that vast, sprawling, complicated, expensive reality to deal with, the Texas legislature sees fit to convene only every other year. Lawmakers take even-numbered years off, so in 2020, Texans can go about their daily business without the threat of legislative mischief. Hoosiers, though, will tremble in fear at what the General Assembly will concoct in its short session designed to deal with state “emergencies.”

The quote marks are necessary around the word emergency because the state constitution’s authors were thinking of the sorts of situations that might arise because not all contingencies can be anticipated by the two-year budget adopted in the long session.

But if 2020 is like 2018, there will be about 800 bills introduced, with roughly 20 percent of them reaching the governor’s desk to be signed into law. Anybody out there think there will really be that many emergencies in the coming year? No, legislators will be merely pushing their pet projects, perfecting existing law by making it denser and less understandable and massaging

the egos of campaign contributors and interest group lobbyists.

Hence my biannual plea for simpler, saner, less expensive state government: Let’s end the short session of the General Assembly.

Lawmakers could use the off year to measure the effects of previous legislation and carefully consider future efforts. They could convene study committees to better understand the issues facing the state. They could spend more time listening to the concerns of constituents. They could try to better learn the needs and potentials of their districts and how they fit into the state’s needs and potentials.

We like to boast that we have part-time legislators who accept a modest annual salary for their efforts, \$22,616. But they also get a daily allowance of \$155 for the 60 days of the long session and 30 days of the short session, plus other expenses.

It averages about \$60,000 a year for being a legislator, and many earn more than \$70,000, according to a 2015 analysis by the Indianapolis Star. That’s for working about 27 hours a week on official business for two months of working days in the long session and one month’s worth in the short session.

Just imagine the good that could be done with all the expense money from simply ditching the 30-day session. And think of the peace of mind it would bring Hoosiers.

Yes, making the change would mean amending the state constitution, not an easy thing to do. But so would other proposals, such as the one by a Dyer Democrat to lower the age of eligibility to serve in the Indiana House or Senate to age 18. In fact, try this experiment. Every time you hear of a hot debate surrounding a 2020 legislative issue, ask yourself: Is this really necessary, or could it wait a year?

I’ve been doing that for about 30 years and I can count on one hand the times an issue couldn’t have waited, and each of them could have been handled with a one- or two-day special session, simply, cheaply and with our sanity intact. ♦

Backgrounders

Hoosiers Don't Need 5G, or Do They?

Barry P. Keating, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is Emeritus Professor of Finance, University of Notre Dame.



(March 5) — Turn on the television, and every third add is for something called 5G. The adds say that 5G is fast, reliable, and the next “must-have” technology. But what is 5G, and do you need it?

Your current smartphone is probably a 4G device. That is, it uses 4th generation cellular technology. 3G preceded 4G, and about the only difference, you might have noticed when you purchased your latest phone was that the time for loading webpages seemed to decrease. So, maybe 5G will decrease the wait time even further. Is that all there is to 5G — a speed increase?

Well, “Yes,” it will increase the speed of your communications and “No,” there is a lot more to 5G than simply an increase in speed. 5G is the next generation of telecommunications protocols (i.e., the rules by which your device and my device communicate with one another and any network). The rollout of 5G networks and the devices that can use them is in its infancy. The phone you have now will not be able to use 5G; your current phone and any other current device will require, not an upgrade, but a replacement. The replacement devices will be expensive at first. At the moment there is only a single commercially available 5G phone; that will change this year. Is speed so important that you will need to toss your old devices in the next few years and purchase an expensive new ones that will essentially perform the same functions?

The answer is a bit ambiguous. The solution as to whether to upgrade or keep the old device is a timing decision. You will upgrade sooner or later because 5G and 4G are significantly different from one another. It is not just a speed increase that separates these two standards. 5G is poised to unleash a massive IoT (Internet of Things)

ecosystem in which billions of devices (not just smartphones) are connected and trading information instantaneously.

This speed increase will affect every Hoosier whether you personally upgrade your phone or not. Interactions with the medical community, the safety provided by your police agencies, and how you receive your entertainment will all change with 5G.

So what exactly will change? Some changes are easy to predict with high accuracy; other changes are probably unforeseen at this time. For certain, healthcare monitoring systems will become much more robust, more autonomous and more frequently used; the ways in which we interact with healthcare providers is due for a sea change. Also certain is that driverless vehicles of all types will become both more common and more capable than the current versions. Note that in both the healthcare and the transportation industries, jobs will be different; Hoosiers cannot assume that every current job will be here 10 years from now. These two industries are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of industries affected by 5G; almost every industry will be affected in some manner. But, why is this different than the rather unnoticed move from 3G to 4G?

Isn't it just a speed difference? Why would speedier web browsing make much of a difference in day-to-day life for Hoosiers?

The answer lies not only in the degree of change in the speed of telecommunications but in the opportunities that speed change affords us. Let's consider a concrete. Imagine a household streaming five different videos while family members browse the Internet on ten different devices. Most communities in Indiana have a single cable television provider.

In South Bend, it's Comcast; they are a monopoly provider of cable services and take full advantage of that position. This is the provider connection these family members would be sharing in South Bend. With 5G, however, an alternative will become available; without any physical cable, a small antenna will be capable of receiving everything coming down your current

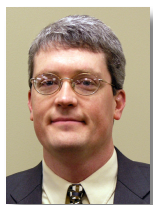
cable (television channels as well as Internet services) at a significantly faster rate than you now receive and with 99.999 percent availability. If that happens (and it will) how do you suppose Comcast will respond to the faster, more reliable, and easier to install competition. It's a good guess that prices for like services will decrease, and reliability of service will increase; competition breeds good results for consumers.

For every Hoosier community, this new delivery technology will require rethinking how to structure government regulations and policies that will either hinder or neutrally treat the new opportunity. Do we still need community ordinances to regulate cable television and the Internet if there are numerous non-cable providers of the same service? What types of policies are appropriate for users of autonomous vehicles? Will healthcare services, especially diagnostic services, be permitted to deliver services digitally?

5G is not something to fear, but it is also not something that we can ignore. It is time to at least begin to examine how we will treat the changes that are coming and to alter what will be antiquated policies and regulations. The game has changed.

A Better Primary System

Jon Bingham is a senior lecturer of economics at Indiana University Southeast. More information about his Presidential Nomination Solution can be found at <https://pppjon.wixsite.com-presnomsolution>.



(Feb. 26) — Once again, Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina winnow the field and shape the race. The looming avalanche of 14 Super Tuesday contests defines (no, more like overwhelms) the prospects of the few candidates remaining. Meanwhile, Indiana watches from the sidelines.

Beyond the political calendar noted above, many other flaws in the nomination process persist: the variety of rules for delegate

apportionment (proportional or winner-take-all), many states having “open” primaries thus allowing non-party voters to impact the party's results, the potential influence of super delegates, etc. The process has no rhyme or reason other than political actors gaining and maintaining their opportunities for undue power and influence. The solution is not found in joining the existing game by shoving Indiana into Super Tuesday in future years.

Rather, in light of the recurring frustrations of the current system every election cycle, my therapy has been to ponder, craft and refine a framework that would create an election process truly worthy of the office it seeks to fill. After all, this is the Presidency of the United States.

My “Presidential Nomination Solution” is simple yet dynamic, giving all states occasional early opportunity to influence the nomination. Its design is purposeful, non-partisan, fair, understandable and transparent. The following key features will eliminate political maneuvering and significantly improve public confidence in the outcome.

The first vote involves three states: No one state should get as much focus as Iowa has. Yet, the number of states getting first focus should remain rather small. A large number of states all at once at the beginning would overwhelm any prospects of lesser-known candidates being able to be heard and considered. Three states to start allows retail politics to remain a part of the process. The solution's outline:

Simple, consistent voting format across the states — I usually am no fan of federal solutions for the states. However, the Presidency is the ultimate federal office. As such, this election process should have some aspects of consistency aligned with how the general election occurs. Thus, all state presidential nomination contests should simply be primaries (using the same voting infrastructure as the general) scheduled on Tuesdays.

Closed primaries — Democrats should select the Democrat nominee. Republicans should select the Republican nominee. Those not willing to

affiliate with that party should not impact that selection. Party affiliation status must be in place before January 1st of the election year.

The calendar – not too early, not too late, not too fast, not too slow: The first three states' primary date will be in early February (as is typical now). Two weeks will separate most election dates in February, March and April, allowing space for campaign activities and a debate among remaining candidates between those primaries. In late April and through May, the pace of voting in the remaining states becomes weekly to complete all 50 states before Memorial Day. As such:

- Six states vote in February.
- 12 states vote in March.
- 12 states vote in April.
- 20 states wrap up the voting in May

No Super Tuesdays — The volume of states on any primary date will remain manageable for candidates who are emerging as viable due to early voting results. The pacing and volume are:

- Three states, then two weeks (with debate)
- Three states, then two weeks (with debate)
- Six states, then two weeks (with debate)
- Three states, then one week
- Three states, then two weeks (with debate)
- Six states, then two weeks (with debate)
- Three states, then one week
- Three states, then one week
- Six states, then one week
- Six states, then one week
- Eight states as the final set

Order of the states — Keeping things simple, use alphabetical order. Thus the first time this system is implemented:

- The first three states would be Alabama, Alaska and Arizona.
- The second three would be Arkansas, California and Colorado.
- The first set of six states would be Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii and Idaho. And so on . . .

Rotation of the states — The first 12 states in one election cycle drop to the bottom of the list the next time. Thus, the second time this process is used:

- The first three states would be Illinois, Indiana and Iowa.
- The second three would be Kansas, Kentucky and Louisiana.
- The first set of six states would be Maine, Maryland (& D.C.), Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota and Mississippi. And so on . . .

Note: Due to 50 states being shifted by 12 each cycle, the process is even more dynamic. For instance, the next time Alabama is early, it is with Wisconsin and Wyoming.

No super delegates or unbound delegates — All delegates are won directly and only based on each state's primary results. Achieving a simple majority of the delegate count secures the nomination.

Purposefully graduated system of winning delegates:

- The first six states: In the earliest contests, when the result is a plurality (when no candidate gets 50 percent or more of the vote), there is value in rewarding the top 3 strong performers in each state. This keeps multiple candidates involved in the next phase. For each state having a plurality, the highest vote-getter wins half of the delegates, the second place candidate gets a third and third place gets a sixth. However, if a candidate gets 50 percent or more in the state, all delegates go to that winner.
- The next 12 states: The field needs to narrow more during this phase, yet not necessarily completely. For each state having a plurality result, the top vote-getter wins two-thirds of the delegates while the second place candidate gets a third. However, if a candidate gets 50 percent or more in the state, all delegates are won.
- The remaining 32 states: Whether majority or plurality, the winner gets all of the state's delegates. This arrangement increases the likelihood of one candidate securing the nomination.

Loyalty of delegates — In June, candidates are responsible to select their delegates from each state so that they are assured of loyalty during the convention proceedings.

- First ballot: On the first ballot, no surprises occur as all delegates vote according to primary results. If no candidate has the majority of delegates, all candidates with less than 10 percent (and any other candidates who wish to withdraw at that time) are removed from consideration.
- Second and subsequent ballot(s) (when necessary): All delegates for candidates on the second ballot remain loyal. All delegates of candidates not on the second ballot are to vote among the remaining options. As long as no candidate wins the simple majority, the candidate with the lowest delegate count on that ballot is removed and the process is repeated for subsequent ballots as needed.

Loyalty of candidates — Once this fair and transparent process is in place, candidates should no longer be allowed to threaten a third-party run. Anyone considering a third-party run should simply do so. However, anyone who enters a party's nomination process forfeits the option of running for President or Vice-President as an independent or other party candidate that year.

These features of the Presidential Nomination Solution provide the framework that addresses the wide variety of shortcomings in the current system. Now is the time for genuine reform to create an election process worthy of the office it seeks to fill.

Student Loan Redux

T. Norman Van Cott, Ph.D., professor of economics and adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, was formerly chair of the Ball State University Economics Department. A version of this article was published by the Foundation for Economic Education.



(Feb. 20) — College students currently graduate with an average student loan debt of \$30,000. At a 4 percent interest rate, monthly

payments of \$304 (\$3,648 per year) retire the debt in 10 years. In all the current brouhaha about the college loan crisis, an important cost to borrowers is unmentioned. To wit, the burden of loan repayment following graduation no doubt delays graduates beginning personal retirement programs.

Financial counselors have long stressed that the “miracle of compounding” becomes increasingly powerful the longer any funds are held. Save early is the counselors’ motto. Not for new college graduates faced with loan repayment. For example, what if the holder of the \$30,000 student loan, who pays it off in 10 years, delays implementing a personal retirement program for 10 years? Does it make a difference? Yes, a big difference. How much?

There are numerous ways to configure examples of the consequences of this delay. To keep things simple, consider two scenarios. First, ask what the average college graduate paying \$3,648 per year on his or her loan could expect to accumulate by retirement had that same amount been annually invested and held in the stock market (say, in an S&P 500 index fund). Second, suppose one adopts the same investment program delayed by 10 years on account of loan repayment.

To this end, it turns out that the average annual return in the stock market since 1928, as measured by the S&P 500 index, is about 10 percent. Making the calculations by hand is tedious. For example, the first year’s payment will grow to $\$3,648 \times (1.1)^{10}$ by the end of 10 years. Likewise, the second year’s payment grows to $\$3,648 \times (1.1)^9$ by the end of nine years, and so on. (Various websites can assist.)

In either scenario, the graduates end up with \$63,948 at the end of 10 years of investing \$3,648 per year. However, the loan re-payer realizes this \$63,498 10 years later than the non-re-payer. Were the non-re-payer to allow his-her \$63,948 to accumulate for another 10 years so that the two were at the same time, the non-re-payer’s S&P account would be worth \$165,864 — more than \$100,000 greater than the re-payer’s account. Alternatively, suppose at the end of 10 years of

investing, both individuals let their S&P accounts accumulate until they reached the retirement age of 65. Assume both graduate at age 22.

The non-re-payer's account would accumulate another 33 years, the re-payer's account 23 years. When both reach age 65, the non-re-payer's account would be worth \$1,485,202; the re-payer's account \$572,609. Yes, the difference is almost \$1,000,000. Saving earlier rather than later matters. No wonder Albert Einstein labeled compound interest the "eighth wonder of the world."

What makes this story even more unfortunate in my view is that the increase in college costs tracks the increase in government support for education.

It is these extra dollars that fund the widely observed growth in college and university administrators (associate provosts, assistant provosts, associate deans, assistant deans and so on). Students end up with an administrative-laden education at the expense of less lucrative financial futures — a poor tradeoff in my book.

Doing Good by Doing Well

(Dec. 24) —Among economists' insights over the last almost 250 years, one of the keenest is that one can do good while doing well.

The idea traces to Adam Smith. It means capitalists' and entrepreneurs' pursuit of profit can have favorable consequences for the community at large — and not just for capitalists and entrepreneurs. It applies equally to landowners and workers pursuing their own interests.

The following are two of Smith's statements of the "doing good while doing well" proposition. The first is from "The Wealth of Nations" and the latter from Smith's 1759 "Theory of Moral Sentiments."

"It is not from the benevolence of the Butcher, the Brewer or the Baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." "Every individual... neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it... he intends only his own

security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention."

One frequently hears about capitalists and entrepreneurs making substantial gifts either before or after their deaths to universities and other non-profit organizations. Many say it is an opportunity for them to "give back," which suggests, at least to me, that the wealth making the gifts possible was obtained in less than noble ways. Regardless, the benefits the community at large reaps from these gifts are not what the doing good while doing well proposition is about.

The "doing good while doing well" proposition does not describe government officials' actions. Rather, the proposition refers to the process by which the capitalists and entrepreneurs earn their wealth. It's not what they do with their accrued wealth. It's the benefit the community realizes as this wealth is accrued. To paraphrase Smith, people enjoy the benefits of meat, beer, and bread as a result of their respective producers' efforts to earn a profit. What these producers do with their wealth is a different question.

For government officials, making personal monetary profits from their jobs is illegal. The result when government officials pursue their own interests, given this illegality, is the topic of the public choice economics. The results do not parallel those of Adam Smith.

The Christmas season each year brings with it churches and benevolent groups organizing distributions of food baskets. I have participated in these efforts, though probably with less enthusiasm than others. Americans are surrounded 24-7 by a process (Smith's invisible hand) that is wealth-producing for all, thereby making these charitable acts possible.

Always in the back of my mind was the "doing good while doing well" proposition. That is, how do the effects of the proposition compare with the distributions by churches and benevolent groups? To repeat a previous cautioning, how does the

process by which capitalists-entrepreneurs pursue profit affect the community at large?

My mind went to the case of Wal-Mart. No one would deny that Wal-Mart is a profit-pursuing entity. At the same time, there is credible evidence that Wal-Mart's presence in a community reduces food prices between 10 and 15 percent. Put on an annual basis, this is equivalent to food shoppers receiving 5.2 to 7.8 weeks of additional food shopping per year. It follows that Wal-Mart spreads far more holiday food cheer than churches and public service groups do.

Food basket distributions presumably trace to noble intentions, while pursuit of profit is widely held to be ignoble. Noble trumps ignoble. That's why the doing good while doing well proposition has always been a tough sell for economists. For many, good things only happen when people intend to do good things.

None of the above is meant to trivialize church food baskets during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Nor is it meant to disparage those making end-of-life or after-life contributions to colleges-universities or not-for-profit institutions. These acts of charity have long played a vital role in American life. Moreover, they are voluntary, and I would be the last to put them down.

Instead, my purpose is to point out that Americans are surrounded 24-7 by a process (Smith's invisible hand) that is wealth-producing for all, thereby making these charitable acts possible.

Romney as Hamlet: Trump Trial Incoherence

John F. Gaski, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is associate professor, at the Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame, specializing in social and political power and conflict. Dr. Gaski is a long-time registered Democrat, and long-time registered Republican — intermittently, not simultaneously or sequentially.

(Feb. 20) — Despite Mitt Romney's contrived and sophistic attempt to justify his Senate vote to convict Donald Trump on one impeachment

article, his public verbal contortions fall short. The self-contradiction with respect to his prior vote in favor of trial witnesses is revealing and damning of Mr. Romney and his motives.

How so? First, Romney's vote for witnesses was inherently an admission that prevailing evidence was insufficient for a definite conclusion or verdict. If insufficient for a guilty verdict, the subsequent Senate decision against more witnesses would render Romney's vote to convict incompatible with his prior vote. In other words, insufficient plus zero still equals insufficient. (Or, if inadequate evidence for a not-guilty conclusion, in Romney's or anyone's mind, the issue is immaterial because U.S. jurisprudence does not require innocence to be proven.)

Alternatively, if Romney's preference for witnesses stemmed from a belief that the body of evidence tendered as of then was enough for a guilty verdict but could still be overcome by further witness-based evidence, then Romney's guilty vote is illegitimate because of his own recognition of the exclusion of potentially exculpatory information.

One other possible option, to make it exhaustive: What if Mitt Romney voted for witnesses while believing that a) the case for conviction had been made but b) more evidence could only have bolstered the case? In that event, however, legally and logically, the prospective extra evidence would be superfluous to a valid conclusion and there was no exigency to support more witnesses, all of which suggests that Romney's thinking must have corresponded to one of the first two scenarios. The vote for witnesses remains belied by the guilty vote, or vice versa, that is.

In any case, Mitt Romney's vote to convict President Trump is incongruent with his own revealed position, internally inconsistent and incoherent. What this signals further is a set of unattractive inferences:

Romney's stated justification for voting to convict does not stand up to elementary scrutiny, so his motives must have been something other than the elevated, principled, noble metaphysics

he proclaimed. What is indicated by default instead is the personal or political because Mitt Romney is far too smart not to discern the incongruence of his alleged reasoning. At least, he always was. Maybe he really is losing his mind, as some prominent critics suspect.

Or, one other hunch: Perhaps Mitt is positioning himself to be the 2020 Vice Presidential nominee — for the Democrats.

A City Afraid of its Own Shadow

(Nov. 27) — Several years ago, the South Bend Tribune printed a speculative, futuristic rendering of a potential South Bend skyline, along with an article featuring the titular question, “Can We Dream Big?” Most readers likely had my same natural reaction, to wit: The dream hardly matters and speculation is idle as long as our city has such economically misguided political leadership, the same kind of stagnant administration decade after decade.

In fact, South Bend’s development regulators are literally afraid of their own shadows. Recall how some East Bank and downtown real estate projects were grounded or constricted recently because zoning and planning authorities were so concerned about the shadows cast by multi-story — not even high-rise — structures. Public ridicule is long overdue regarding the city government’s anti-development decisions.

The newspaper’s fanciful skyscraper skyline will never have a chance to get o the ground in this town if we continue to have the same breed of public officials. Good thing the developers of Manhattan, Hong Kong, San Francisco the Eiffel Tower, Shanghai and other classic urban skylines were not afraid of shadows.

Having recently noticed the construction advances with the new Cascade building on the river near downtown, however, I see that the structure already is improving our center city’s aesthetics, even in its unfinished condition. Bleak empty space in a highly visible location is being filled with economic



development and conspicuous progress. It is also reasonable to foresee that the Cascade project — the cosmetic aspect and otherwise — will contribute materially to further downtown development, which our community has been desperate for since Studebaker’s demise.

This is the good news. Panzica Corp., the developer, has already done more for South Bend than nearly every living local politician. The same can be said for Dave Matthews, especially if his long-harassed LaSalle edifice ever is allowed to be built. That multi-use project is to provide vital infrastructure to support further in-town development.

The middling news us that at least some of developer Matthews’ big new projects finally have been approved by city government and are under way. Unfortunately, their scope has been curtailed subjectively and judgmentally by the pols and urban planners in government. Some of the projected buildings could have been larger, with more beneficial economic impact for the city via needed density and critical mass. But no, those shadow concerns again.

We can hypothesize about the underlying problem but it seems straightforward: Local zoning and planning officials have shortchanged objective economic factors in evaluating candidate development projects in favor of squishy subjectivity and politics. This is natural because, for most public officials, the squishy and the political constitute their professional background.

Unbridled development is preferred instead? No, just regulation based on economics and reason rather than politics and whim. The root problem has become clear: Local regulatory mediocrity occurs because the regulators are appointed by pols who, themselves, are mediocrities. Our outgoing mayor is clearly no mediocrity academically or in terms of marketing himself. Yet the quality of South Bend streets, law enforcement and some personnel appointments collectively suggest that he is no better than the rest as a city manager.

We can hope that our area’s urban planners might adopt one of the Notre Dame Architecture

School's new plans for the rest of east downtown's barren moonscape. But let us not get hopes too high. The motto "Dream(ing) big" is still moot in South Bend given its long-term political rut — the real shadow over our city.

We're Rebar Rich

Jason Arp, for nine years a trader in mortgaged-backed securities for Bank of America, was recently reelected to a second term representing the 4th District on the Fort Wayne City Council. Arp has served on the Redevelopment Commission, the Community Legacy Investment Committee and as co-chair of the Finance Committee of the Common Council.



(Feb. 18) — When a political machine runs your town, you get results that may not make much economic sense but are nonetheless predictable — predictably bad.

Who, for example, would spend the equivalent of \$220 a month to lease a space for which they intend to get revenue equivalent to \$65 per month?

The Fort Wayne Redevelopment Commission, that's who.

During its Feb. 10 meeting, this group of city planners and overseers voted to approve a pair of long-term leases on two garages encapsulated within mixed-use buildings that include retail, office and residential units along the city's riverfront.

On paper, these will be beautiful facilities that should enhance the heart of the downtown corridor replacing vacant lots where 19th century factories once stood. But a financial detail of the two projects is not so rosy.

Project No. 1 Estimate — \$68 million

15 Townhomes
217 apartments
12,000 sf commercial
651 parking spaces

Project No. 2 Estimate — \$89 million

7 town homes
222 apartments
27,000 sf commercial
913 parking spaces

The terms of the leases on these projects are non-economical, ludicrously so. The city, through the Redevelopment Commission, will pay \$2.4 million in year one for the larger project and \$1.675 million for the smaller, where these amounts are tied to a 2 percent per annum scaler. That means the total payment for the base rent is \$4.075 million in the first year, where it increases by 2 percent a year until reaching \$6.55 million in the 25th and last year of the contract. These payments accumulate to \$130 million in total over the 25-year term.

Moreover, this is a "triple-net" lease, so the city pays utilities and taxes on the facility as well. The expected revenues (many locked in as long-term leases to the developer-apartment owners) are about \$1.2 million a year. These revenues also scale at 2 percent, so it will be \$1.9 million by the final year, totaling about \$40 million. The nearly \$3 million contractual annual loss grows to \$4.5 million by the final year of the lease. Over the term of the lease, the city is paying \$91 million more than expected parking lease rates. Discounting these payments at 5 percent at the end of year the totals come to a present value of \$72 million in payments over 25 years, with a present value of \$21 million in revenue in the same time period.

To summarize, there is an overall loss of \$51 million in today's dollars. Nearly one-third of the \$157-million project package is funded by taxpayers through property and income taxes making up operating losses over the 25-year period. The developer has minimal risk, bonding for a 25-year loan for only the present value of the lease proceeds. The rest is funded by a combination of additional bank loans, state tax-credits and developer equity.

The cash flows of the projects, then, at market prices with standard expense assumptions and a generous 5 percent discount rate, support a market value of a mere \$90 million. While this is

not the most egregious overpricing of a project we've seen, it reflects that the over spending is made up for with government subsidies in the form of a wildly overpriced pair of garages and a state tax-credit.

The garages are just another venture in a long line of examples of how a group, a political machine, gaining control of municipal government, can meddle in the local economy, trying to force outcomes that may be superficially appealing but that no entrepreneur would be willing to finance on his or her own.

Another, more recent, example of such machination is the subsidized restoration of the former General Electric site in Fort Wayne. There, a combination of nearly \$200 million of local, state and federal subsidies are being used to facilitate the move of a company headquarters a short six miles from adjacent New Haven.

Is that an appropriate use of taxpayer money? The end result is that taxpayers made it possible for a politically selected developer to construct and own apartments, commercial offices and garage space that may be lucrative at a level of cost that free markets would not otherwise support. Again, no private commercial property owner would rent space for more than three times what they expect to receive in revenue.

But this is what we have come to expect. The cabal that runs the city rewards political contributors and key "stakeholders" in the industries that benefit the most from over-spending on mal-investment in downtown real estate, namely law firms that represent the participants, architects-engineers, construction management firms and the various suppliers of concrete, rebar and the like.

As long as the music keeps playing, all is well for those included in the game. For without an honest mass media, the public will be no wiser. However, when the economy eventually slows and the mal-investments are laid bare, it will be the taxpayer who suffer.

The long-term capital leases and bonds, regardless of declining tax revenue in a cyclical recession, will need to be paid. That means either

a tax rate increase or fewer police and firefighters, and fewer street repairs, as the city cuts essential services.

There will be political turmoil but a new council and a new administration won't be able to fix it all. The attention of prosecutors and grand juries may be needed to keep this kind of racketeering from reoccurring.

Meet the Young Men Who Will Save America

Dr. Richard Moss, M.D., surgeon practicing in Jasper, was a candidate for Congress in 2016 and 2018. He has written "A Surgeon's Odyssey" and "Matilda's Triumph," both books available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Contact him at richardmossmd.com or Richard Moss, M.D. on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



(Jan. 28) — I went to a "Game Feed" recently, an event put on annually by a local who goes by the name of "Chief." He organizes this every January, in the winter, on a Saturday, in the middle of God's country, on the outskirts of the town of Duff in Dubois County, southern Indiana.

It was a cold day with freezing temperatures, which was better than last year when it was raining and muddy. The dirt road was rocky and curving and surrounded by dense forest; it led into the property where the hunters gathered. It included a rundown but functioning cabin within which was a fireplace — a perfect place to congregate and escape the cold. There were a hundred or so hunters and friends, all gun people, a Second Amendment crowd, comfortable in the world of guns, ammo, camouflage, decoys, field dressing, butchering and living off the land, my kind of people. There were all ages represented including my son and his friends in their early 20s, and then up into the 50s, 60s and beyond.

The theme here was "game," which meant flesh garnered through hunting and not from the supermarket or deli. As such, the various meats were lean, free of chemicals or additives, as good and tasty as it gets. The hunters prepared the

meats, cooking, sautéing, grilling, barbecuing or frying on small gas or other makeshift stoves in the open air. There was turkey, pheasant, duck, moose, deer, squirrel, beaver, elk, rabbit and boar — enticing aromas everywhere. Some of the morsels were wrapped in bacon or strips of ham, or layered with cheese, accompanied by different sauces or gravies, or plain, the wondrous flavors of the ungarnished meat more than delicious enough.

The spirits flowed freely including whiskey, gin, bourbon, vodka, rum, beer and homemade wine, accompanied often by cigars — manly combinations. There was a plentitude of small fires around which the congregants huddled, drinking and eating, enjoying the camaraderie and their shared passion for hunting. The conversations were lively and good-natured.

I spent time with my son and his friends. They were a rarity, it seemed today, young conservatives. In somewhat inebriated fashion, they bemoaned the changes occurring in the country, the breakdown of the family, the coarsening of the culture and the rejection of faith. There was the ticking debt bomb. They worried also about future assaults on the Second Amendment and their right to self-defense. They expressed unease about their future, and I did not blame them.

These young men, patriotic, gun-loving Americans in flyover country, represented a despised demographic in today's media and culture. Taken together, they were a motley collection: factory workers, small business men, farmers, truckers, mechanics, builders, marketers, website designers, students, teachers, retailers, attorneys, craftsmen, accountants and so on — the backbone of the nation, in other words. They were united by a love of the outdoors, guns, the hunting arts and many shared values. Talking with them, I felt a sense of despair, as if I were witnessing the passing of a way of life and culture, one that had dominated the country since its inception, had always been mainstream, but had now become marginalized and under attack.

These young people and, I suspected, the majority of those present that day, understood that America was a unique phenomenon. Its formation was providential and based on a most improbable sequence of events and convergence of philosophies; it was unlikely to be repeated. The way of centralized planners and the encroaching, coercive state was the way of all history and of the world today other than a precious few outliers, led, of course, by this country.

The United States was different in that it upheld from its origin a belief in the sanctity of the individual, the right to self-defense, small government, the free market and Judeo-Christian tenets. Most important was the influence of the Bible, and the belief that individuals were created in the image of God. Indeed these were the magic ingredients, the critical strands that the founders cobbled together to forge a nation that rejected tribal norms and historical precedent and embraced instead inalienable rights and liberty.

I hoped that America would withstand the assaults from within and not go the way of Rome and other great civilizations that have come and gone. I prayed that a divided nation with so many of its citizens having lost the plot of America, would not succumb to illiberal and hostile ideologies, culminating in its demise and fragmentation, a once magnificent civilization that ultimately could not sustain itself.

Yet my young friends were confident even as they expressed their apprehensions. Through the haze of gin and bourbon, they espoused optimism. They stumbled through defenses of the American way. They tripped over declarations of allegiance to free enterprise. And, yes, despite the alcohol, they were rational.

Many of them, as my son, were high school athletes — a hardy bunch, full of themselves, and of sturdy timber. They had engaged in high-level contests at young ages on the courts and fields of competition. Victory and defeat had seared them. They understood discipline, teamwork and sacrifice.

Young leaders, they are among the best this nation has to offer. They do not doubt themselves or their future prospects. They have their plans, come what may. They intend to continue the plot of America, the story of America, the great dream of America. I believe in them, and the country depends on them — and millions of others like them. I hope they will succeed, convince others of their creed, and thus save the nation.

Hoosier Cooperation

Maryann O. Keating, Ph.D., a resident of South Bend and an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is co-author of “Microeconomics for Public Managers,” Wiley-Blackwell.



(Jan. 24) — “Tragedy of the Commons” refers to the ruin of resources, such as land, water, or the environment in general, available for use by any resident. Lacking legal ownership, commonly held resources become extinct, over-used, congested or polluted.

Such resources are considered public goods in which free-riders take personal advantage. When the stock of these resources degrades, society as whole experiences a decline in total well-being.

Garrett Hardin’s essay, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” became popular around 1968. Hardin, for example, suggested that any group grazing sheep on a common pastures has an incentive to increase the size of its personal flock. The first group to seize this opportunity could form a monopoly, accumulate wealth, and over time exhaust the grazing potential for other users (Frischmann, Marciano, and Ramello, “Tragedy of the Commons after 50 Years,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Fall, 2019, 211-228).

Hardin recognized two solutions for this problem: government regulation or privatization. Government could limit the tragedy by directly regulating resource use. Or, it could establish a system of property rights extending private ownership to resources presently held in common. Note that both solutions rely on collective action through government to introduce constraints.

Hardin argued that infringements on personal liberty is the price for avoiding universal ruin.

Around the time Hardin’s essay was published, the late Elinor Ostrom along with her husband, Vincent Ostrom, were working at Indiana University. They studied how commonly held resources in the real world do not always lead to tragic ruin. In 2009, Elinor was awarded a Nobel Prize in Economics. She challenged conventional wisdom by explaining and providing examples of how commonly held property was being successfully managed without central (federal) authority or privatization. Ostrom ruled out one of Hardin’s basic assumptions: people could not communicate and find ways to cooperate in making decisions about commonly shared resources (Frischmann, 218).

Consider local examples supporting the Ostrom hypothesis. Indiana state parks retain a unique local character and protect against depletion and congestion with adjustable user fees to deal with changing conditions. The Indiana Toll Road is under private contract, but the state retains ownership and longterm decision-making.

Consider, as well, Friends of the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail dedicated to converting an abandoned railroad corridor into a linear park and greenery. This not-for-profit group of individuals purchased the land and retain a voluntary advisory committee to assist with monitoring activities and trail maintenance. The Pumpkinvine is presently managed collaboratively by four separate park departments: Goshen, Middlebury, Elkhart County and Shipshewana.

But what about housing condominiums and other private associations lacking any government enforcement? Elinor Ostrom, following three decades of study and observation, concluded that individuals engaging in face-to-face communication can approach socially optimal usage levels in commons aside from any association with government.

Her optimism was based on the assumption that certain individuals, unlike “rational egoists,” are willing to forgo personal gain and contribute to the common good. She identified such

individuals as “conditional cooperators” (Frishmann, 218-219). A “rational egoist” chooses not to trust and therefore tends not to participate in cooperative activities. A “conditional cooperator” values reciprocity, fairness and being trustworthy and therefore starts with a predisposition to cooperate.

Ostrom realized that, even if a significant proportion of “conditional cooperators” agree to the bylaws of a homeowner’s association, this does not guarantee the intended behavior. As time rolls by, residents may, for example, construct whatever type of fencing they desire and waterski day and night on an interior lake. Therefore, Ostrom offered a model agreement designed to result in favorable outcomes (“Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Summer 2000, 137-158).

The first design principle of Ostrom’s model is acknowledging that associations achieve a more sustainable outcome of common resources when they devise and enforce their own clear basic rules rather than those externally imposed.

Second, agreed to rules, crafted to local conditions, must be designed to restrict the amount, timing and ways in which the common resource is used and to allocate benefits proportional to user fees.

Third, most of the individuals affected should be able to participate in making and modifying rules.

Fourth, to survive long term, the association must be able to select its own monitors for assessing resource sustainability and user behavior.

The fifth and final design principle is the need to introduce graduated sanctions that depend on the seriousness and context of violators. A real threat to the continuance of any association occurs, if some participants repeatedly break rules (Ostrom, 151).

We come to realize all too well the truth of these principles through personal experience. However, this in no way diminishes the contribution of a Hoosier economist offering hope

and a blueprint for circumventing the “Tragedy of the Commons.”

Tariffs and Their Exemptions

(Jan. 15) — Over the Christmas holidays while entertaining house guests, our 20-year-old stove malfunctioned destroying the main circuit breaker and plunging the house into cold and darkness.

Replacing our Sears Kenmore stove is no longer an option, and, to avoid remodeling kitchen space, we realized that we would have to pay a fairly high price for a non-standard size range. Unfortunately, we found that an American-made replacement exceeded what we were willing to pay by about \$2,000. Several international brands were available but for \$1,000 above the amount we planned to pay.

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal relates to our experience (“I Support Trump’s Tariffs but Need an Exemption,” Jan., 7, 2020). Since the recent imposition of a 25 percent tariff on imported steel, the U.S. has experienced increases in overall steel production and employment. However, U.S. producers of certain kitchen appliances and car parts require nickel-bearing stainless steel slabs. These specific steel products are still produced domestically.

However, they are available only at a price significantly higher than imports from countries in which steel is not subject to tariffs or is actually subsidized. Therefore, U.S. domestic producers of appliances face increasing costs for inputs and for that reason request exemptions for certain categories of steel imports.

Given the opportunity, I would gladly inform President Donald Trump how his broad-based tariffs, which may be in the national interest, have affected the price of our new stove. However, I would also strongly suggest that, before making categorical exemptions to the tariff schedule, he consider their potential damaging effects.

Engaging in the process of lowering tariffs on favored industries and products will only increase economic distortions. Expanding the number of exemptions in a country’s tariff schedule leads to investment uncertainties and increased lobbying,

if not corruption. As a former tariff analyst at the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, I realize that tariffs on products never work out well for consumers. I also know for certain that favoritism in trade policy is generally a national political and economic disaster.

Indiana Tax Rates

(Nov. 19) — Larry DeBoer and Tamara Ogle of Purdue University presented a comprehensive webinar last month entitled “On Local Government: A Look at State and Local Taxes in Indiana.” It is worthwhile summarizing a few of their findings.

The webinar, sponsored by Community Development Extension, asked, “How high or low are Indiana’s taxes compared with other states?” It analyzed Indiana’s tax regime both in terms of economic incentives and in taxes paid by low income households.

In 2016, residents in Indiana’s four surrounding states paid higher percentages of their personal income in state and local taxes. Hoosiers, like those in Texas and Utah, remitted approximately 8.5 percent to 10 percent of their incomes to local and state government. Those living in New York, North Dakota, Maine, Minnesota, Rhode Island and Vermont paid 11 percent or more.

However, Indiana’s 7 percent sales-tax rate is tied for 2nd highest in the U.S. Indiana relies more heavily on general sales taxes than most other states. Except for groceries, the Indiana sales tax is widely applied to most goods and services. A wide sales-tax base is desirable given economists’ fear of distortions resulting from exemptions granted certain industries.

Fortunately, local cities or counties within Indiana do not have a sales tax in addition to the general sales tax. Indiana is also less likely than other states to depend on selective miscellaneous or motor vehicle taxes.

Indiana’s income tax is a flat tax, meaning that higher income households pay more but at the same rate as lower income households. Although Indiana remains in the bottom third of states

relying on income-tax revenue, it is one of the few states in which some towns and counties assess an additional local income tax.

Local property tax rates in Indiana are capped, but obviously the amount paid depends heavily on how property is assessed. Property values in Indiana tend to be low relative to the rest of the country, and the amount collected as a percent of home values is 0.82 percent. This is well below the average U.S. rate.

A chart breaks down the shares of total tax revenue collected by various types of state and local taxes in Indiana and for the whole of the U.S. It shows that compared with Indiana, states as a whole depend more on property and less on sales taxes. It shows as well that the share paid on individual and corporate income taxes exceeds that of the U.S. as a whole.

The Purdue webinar went on to show that Indiana taxes are pretty evenly balanced between types of taxes as compared with states such as New Hampshire with no general sales tax but raising 65 percent of its state and local revenue with property taxes.

Taxes should have low collection costs for both taxpayers and government. In addition, taxes can be evaluated on two criteria: first, on non-interference with household and business private decision-making; and secondly, on fairness both in terms of services received and in not contributing to income inequality. Two organizations that evaluate state and local taxes are the Tax Foundation and the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP).

The Tax Foundation in 2019 rated Indiana 10th best of all states in having a healthy business climate. Indiana achieved this ranking for the most part due to relatively low rates applied broadly and for having flat rates on individual and corporate income.

On the other hand, ITEP ranks Indiana 12th worse in terms of promoting post-tax income equality. The 20 percent of Indiana households at the bottom of the income scale pay between 12 and 13 percent of their before-transfer income in state and local income taxes; whereas the high

income top 20 percent of households pay somewhere between 7 and 8 percent. The difference to a large degree results from Indiana's reliance on regressive sales taxes. Lower income people spend rather than save and hence pay a higher share of their income in sales taxes. In addition, Indiana does not compensate for its regressive sales tax with progressive higher income-tax rates. Indiana does, however, offer a refundable Earned Income Tax Credit.

Indiana ranks above neighboring states, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Illinois, in terms of Business Tax Climate and above Illinois in terms of ITEP's Tax Equality Ranking. The Purdue study singles out Utah for further analysis, because it manages to attain the same relatively high ranking as Indiana on Business Climate but ranks much higher in terms of Tax Equality. Utah's low income families benefit from income-tax credits and deductions and a lower sales-tax rate.

Factors unrelated to tax structure can affect the variation in taxes paid as a percentage of income between low- and high-income households. For example, Utah's pre-tax median income is relatively high allowing some lower income households to save as well as spend. Also, pre-tax income equality in Utah exceeds that of any other state in the country; thus, differences between households in the percentages of income paid in state and local taxes tend to be smaller.

How state and local spending reallocates income between households is a completely different story and beyond the scope of how tax revenue is collected. Hoosiers need to decide the extent to which both the state and local tax and spending regimes reflect personal priorities.

Meanwhile, we might derive some satisfaction in knowing that as a percentage of personal income we presently enjoy relatively low taxes compared with other states and the country in general.

Preserving the Indy 500

Stephen E. Williams, a founder of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is a partner in Emswiler Williams Noland & Clarke, LLC and an avid Indy car fan. He wrote this at the request of the foundation.

(Jan. 2) — While other sports provide seedings and other advantages to favored participants (e.g. NFL playoffs, NCAA tournament), the Indianapolis 500 has demanded equality of opportunity, not crony capitalism. With few exceptions since 1911, the 33 fastest qualifiers start the race in the order of their qualifying times, no starting positions having been guaranteed to drivers, teams or sponsors despite their pedigree or connections.



This month, Roger Penske will finalize his purchase of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the IndyCar Series. Penske's acquisition of the Speedway has been praised universally. He is seen as someone who can bring more resources to the sport while upholding the traditions that fans hold dear.

Nevertheless, Penske has promised to "break some glass" in an effort to move the sport forward. Alarming, in 2019 as a car owner, Penske floated the idea of guaranteed starting places in the Indianapolis 500 for teams running the full IndyCar Series, so-called full-time teams. This is a form of Corporate Welfare that IndyCar fans should reject.

A major reason that the Speedway draws a live audience of over 300,000 people is that they know they will see the 33 fastest open-wheel cars on earth. They expect this because it's been this way since 1911.

The idea of guaranteed spots flies in the face of this tradition of ultimate competition. 1986 champion Bobby Rahal has said that the most frightening thing he has ever done is qualify for the Indianapolis 500. In 1993, he failed to qualify. Other former winners also suffered this fate, among them three-time champion Johnny Rutherford and two-time winner Rodger Ward. In 1995, Penske's drivers Emerson Fittipaldi (two-time Indy winner and two-time Formula One World Champion) and Al Unser, Jr. (two-time Indy winner) failed to qualify.

In May of 2019 in the last minutes of qualifying, a 23-year-old American, Kyle Kaiser, bumped from the starting field the most heralded driver of his generation, two-time Formula One World Champion Fernando Alonso of Spain. Kaiser's team, Juncos Racing, had a budget that would seem like a rounding error compared to Alonso's team, McLaren Racing. This is precisely the type of competition that Indy fans deserve. Again, to deny them this with guaranteed spots threatens to lessen the Indy experience and diminish the audience both live and on television.

An alternative is to celebrate the competition, not eliminate it. This could be done in at least two ways. First, the full-time team could be guaranteed the prize money paid for last place in the 500. Second, the full-time driver who gets bumped could be guaranteed a five-minute spot on the TV broadcast to tout his sponsors and explain the difficulty in qualifying for the biggest race in the world. These steps would address the teams' commercial interests without lessening the on-track competition.

Even the drivers who fail to qualify appreciate the necessity of starting the fastest 33 cars. Alonso, the world champion who missed the race in 2019, has stated that his primary goal for 2020 is to qualify for and win the Indianapolis 500. Alonso's high regard for the Speedway would be lessened if anyone with merely a large checkbook could qualify for the starting grid.

IndyCar fans must insist that the new ownership group place equality of opportunity before crony capitalism. As Kaiser said when he eliminated Alonso: "This is absolutely the greatest story of my life." The Speedway cannot deny this experience to Indy fans or the next Kyle Kaiser. Let us continue to celebrate the competition of the Indy 500.

The Blue Indy Autopsy

Andrea Neal is an adjunct scholar with the Indiana Policy Review Foundation. Her latest book, "Pence – The Path to Power" is available here online from Indiana University Press or at a bookstore near you.



(Dec. 26) — Indianapolis taxpayers are out millions for the city's relentless effort to force motorists to give up their automobiles. The demise of electric car-sharing service Blue Indy, announced with a whimper on Dec. 20, comes as no surprise to anyone who has studied the urban transit landscape. Give the equally-trumpeted Red Line Rapid Bus a few years to meet a similar end.

What began five years ago with a highly-publicized deal between the outgoing Republican Mayor Greg Ballard and French company the Bollere Group will conclude on May 21, 2020, when the company ceases operations in Indianapolis. The program is losing money, the company said, and has no chance of becoming profitable anytime soon.

From the beginning, this deal was doomed. The City-County Council had no say in the project, there was no competitive bidding, and no public hearings were held to solicit public opinion on the merits of investing \$6 million in taxpayer funds. There was no vetting of Bollere group whose inaugural car sharing experience launched in 2011 in Paris, a city with almost three times the population and an entirely different transit culture (and which ended its contract with Bollere in 2018 due to chronic budget shortfalls).

In return for tax dollars, Blue Indy was supposed to share profits with the city, but the service never made a dime. In the meantime, ratepayers of Indianapolis Power and Light were socked with \$3 million in rate hikes to underwrite distribution system upgrades for power charging stations installed along the streets where Blue Indy cars parked. Taxpayers spent millions more to reimburse the city's private meter operator, ParkIndy, for lost revenues from meters removed by the city to make way for Blue Indy parking spaces.

The service lacked customers. As of August, the company reported 3,000 active members — a fifth of the total it projected necessary for profitability — served by 200 cars parked at 92 stations.

The business model was never viable because it suited only a sliver of the motoring public: residents who lived near parking stations and

needed transit to locations that also had stations; for example, from Broad Ripple to the Indianapolis airport. Users could rent and return cars at stations located across the city for a one-time fee (\$8 for 20 minutes and 40 cents per additional minute) or annual membership (\$9.99 per month plus \$4 for 20 minutes and 20 cents per additional minute. Folks wishing to rent a car for a day or to get to work could do so for considerably less using other widely available options, including IndyGo bus, taxicab, or Uber and Lyft ride services.

The honest truth – one that Blue Indy managing director James Delgado himself admitted – was that the only way to attract more customers was for Blue Indy to talk people out of their cars. And not a single study shows Indy motorists are ready to do that. “We still have a lot of work to do to grow the membership base here and change the culture from a car-ownership culture to a shared-use and mobility culture,” Delgado told the Indianapolis Business Journal this summer.

Comparisons to the city’s latest grandiose transit initiative – the 13-mile, fixed route all-electric bus called the Red Line – are both inevitable and merited. Like Blue Indy, this \$96-million initiative was launched with little public buy-in; in fact, the voter referendum that enabled a tax hike to help pay for the system was marketed as financing systemwide mass transit improvements that would benefit the entire city. Those other improvements have since been delayed.

Like Blue Indy, the financial success of Red Line will hinge on ridership numbers that are not supported by data, a fact seemingly acknowledged in January by IndyGo spokesperson Lauren Day who said success would not be judged by number of riders but rather the line’s impact in strengthening communities and economic development along the route – a trend known as transit-oriented development. In 2016, urban growth expert Randal O’Toole warned Indianapolis not to move forward with the project, telling The Indiana Policy Review that it “follows

an urban-planning fad that has failed in other cities that have tried it.”

As with Blue Indy, the vendors hired for various pieces of the Red Line project lacked track records of quality work. Most notably, Indianapolis contracted with China-based bus maker BYD that had repeatedly missed deadlines and delivered defective products for a similar transit system in Albuquerque. No surprise here: In March, IndyGo announced its electric buses were failing to hold a charge for the 275-mile driving range promised by the manufacturer. It perhaps goes without saying that ridership has already plummeted since the celebratory launch of the Red Line on Sept. 1 when the weather was delightful and the service was free.

The Blue Indy fiasco, and the almost certain financial failure of the Red Line, bring to mind an old English proverb, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.” It is time for city planners to stop dreaming up transit projects that waste millions when all available evidence suggests that folks with cars are not willing to abandon them for mass transit. And for those who need mass transit, there are cheaper and more innovative ways to get them to their destinations.

Christian Persecution Increasing

(Dec. 4) — It is a given that American Christians will gather in churches this Advent season to celebrate the miracle of Christmas. We will hear the familiar passage from Isaiah 9:6: “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us,” words that foretold a messiah’s birth. We will sing “Silent Night” in candlelit sanctuaries. We will do these things because they are the comfortable routines of Christian faith.

There are places in the world, however, where such routines are subversive acts. There will be no reading of the Bible at the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, China. The pastor there, Wang Yi, was arrested last December for organizing a prayer meeting marking the 10-year anniversary of the Sichuan earthquake. There will be no public worship in Pakistan where “members of the Christian minority and others remain at

risk of blasphemy accusations that can arise from trivial disputes and escalate to criminal prosecution and mob violence,” according to Freedom House’s 2019 Freedom in the World report.

Prayers will be shared quietly and only between friends in northern Nigeria where the militant group Boko Haram terrorizes believers and has “set out to eliminate Christianity and pave the way for the total Islamization of the country,” as reported by the Catholic Bishop Conference of Nigeria. There will be no mention of Christmas in North Korea, whose citizens are encouraged to spend Dec. 24 remembering the birthday of Kim Jong-un’s late grandmother, the “sacred mother” of that country’s 1948 communist revolution.

Safe in our pluralistic and mostly tolerant western world, American Christians take for granted the free exercise of religion and are oblivious to the geographic spread of prejudice against people of faith. Earlier this year, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued an independent study of Christian persecution worldwide, incidents ranging from church bombings to clergy kidnapping to unsubstantiated blasphemy charges. The report concluded that, “In some regions, the level and nature of persecution is arguably coming close to meeting the international definition of genocide” and that “Christianity now faces the possibility of being wiped-out in parts of the Middle East where its roots go back furthest.” As examples: In Syria, the Christian population has dropped from 1.7 million in 2011 to under 450,000 today. In Iraq, ethnic cleansing has diminished the size of ancient Christian communities from 1.5 million in 2003 to 120,000.

In a country that prides itself on the First Amendment’s free expression clauses, what explains our inattention to the denial of religious freedoms elsewhere? Perhaps Christians are unaware of the issue in light of more extensive media coverage of anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish hate crimes here and abroad. The British study, “Bishop of Truro’s Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted

Christians,” speculates that western guilt has kept Britain and others from confronting persecution in countries where their previous interactions may have been unwelcome or unwanted, as occurred in colonial relationships in Asia, the Middle East, or Africa. “But this is not about special pleading for Christians,” the authors write. “It is an equality issue. If one minority is on the receiving end of 80 percent of religiously motivated discrimination it is simply not just that they should receive so little attention.”

When Christian persecution is exposed, it will bring attention to all forms of religious oppression, the authors argue. “If Christians are being discriminated against in one context or another you can be confident other minorities are too. So renewing a focus on Christian persecution is actually a way of expressing our concern for all minorities who find themselves under pressure. And ignoring Christian persecution might well mean we’re ignoring other forms of repression as well.”

While alarming, the British study is not surprising. It affirms 10 years of Pew Research showing increasing governmental restrictions on religious activity worldwide. The latest Pew report indicated that Christian groups were harassed in 144 nations in 2016, up from 128 the year before, with China leading the world in government-sponsored restrictions on religious exercise. Muslims were second most targeted, persecuted in 142 countries.

The incidents are so routine that most receive little media coverage. On Dec. 1, gunmen attacked Christian worshippers in the West African nation of Burkina Faso, killing 14. As believers prayed, assailants on motorbikes sprayed bullets into the Protestant congregation. This Christmas, Americans should be both thankful for a First Amendment that protects our holiday routines and more aware that, for others around the globe, claiming Christ as Messiah is fraught with danger.

The Grateful Santa

D. Eric Schansberg is Professor of Economics at Indiana University Southeast, adjunct scholar for the Indiana Policy Review Foundation and author of “Turn Neither to the Right nor Left: A Thinking Christian’s Guide to Politics and Public Policy.”



(Dec. 17) — My wife and I have a friend who has worked at a large retail store as an elf with Santa. She has told us some great stories about the wide variety of Santas and customers she has experienced.

She has nicknamed some of the Santas she encountered. I had heard of “Dirty Santa” before — one of the names for the gift-giving and gift-stealing game we like to play among adults. But she knows other Santas I haven’t met yet: Grumpy Santa, Politically Incorrect Santa, Christian Santa, Actor Santa and Diva Santa.

As a labor economist, I was fascinated to think about the labor market for Santas. It’s temporary and seasonal work. So, Santas are semi-retired or are using their Santa income to supplement their primary gig. Santas and the stores generally rely on an agency to act as a middleman. That’s common for workers who are temporary or in a specialized market with few service providers.

Of course, it’s not efficient for stores to have suits for multiple Santas with their different sizing needs. So part of hiring Santa is hiring (and renting) his uniform. Uniform quality ranges quite a bit, with suits as expensive as \$3,000. In case you’re curious: our friend reports that most seem to sport a natural beard and sufficient girth to play the part well.

Santas often rotate between shifts and stores. For a full day at a retail store, working for the whole day would usually be too taxing. And given that the quality of Santas varies, maybe the agencies find it more useful to rotate them, rather than deal with complaints.

In the government’s K-12 schools, unable to fire unproductive teachers easily, schools will sometimes “pass the trash” — moving poor

teachers every few years, before parent complaints reach a climax. I wonder if poor Santas get shuffled around the same way. But as with teachers, Santas are often wonderful people who are reasonably effective at their work.

As you might imagine, the customers (adults and children) are also a wide mix, from the kind to the mean, from the quirky to the foul, from the grateful to the ungrateful. Some folks want a picture taken with their dog. Others bring babies with wet or dirty diapers. Some were experiencing this as the only Christmas they would have — because they could not afford anything or because a husband was dogmatically opposed to Christmas in any form.

All of them were receiving a service at no monetary cost. Some are so thankful; others seem to be missing “the reason for the season.” Christmas and old St. Nick have their origins in Christ’s birth and St. Nicholas’s benevolence. In both cases, the historical events are built on grace — unmerited favor, getting something wonderful that we don’t deserve.

In “Behind the Beard: A Santa Claus Journey,” Aaron Bandy describes life as a Santa, including some of his job interviews. He tells the story about one manager who wanted to make sure he was not a trouble-maker. I enjoyed Bandy’s discussion of costumes, children, parents and his gratitude for the opportunity to earn a good side income while doing something he loves.

Christmas can be a challenging time — for those who have recently experienced the loss of a loved one, those with few material resources, those away from family and so on. But ingratitude is never a good way to live. And around Christmas, it is especially ironic and appalling. When you’re tempted to moan and complain, here’s the best gift to give: Count your blessings; help those who are less fortunate; and embrace the grace behind the history of our celebration.

‘Socialism’

(Nov. 26) — Economists Robert Lawson and Benjamin Powell have written “Socialism Sucks: Two Economists Drink Their Way Through the

Unfree World” — a breezy book on a stale and lousy economic system. Its casual tone is rooted in their use of beer as a metaphor and a key prop to describe socialism in various countries.

Their punchline: Many people advocate socialism without knowing what it is. Socialism is when government owns all of the means of production rather than individuals. But few people really want that, including most self-styled socialists. Instead, most of them imagine “socialism” as a dog’s breakfast of Leftist and Liberal policy proposals. They see it as a vague call to increase government activism, justice, fairness and, ironically, democracy.

So, if you’re worried that so many people are advocating (real) socialism today, you can rest easy. They’re not advocating the abolition of private property and political oppression. (Not many people understand capitalism either, but that’s another story.) Their policy prescriptions might be troubling but thankfully few folks are really embracing socialism.

Lawson and Powell visit eight countries to describe various types of socialism. They start with Sweden as “Not Socialism.” Contrary to popular opinion, the authors cite data from the “Freedom Index” to note that Sweden has a relatively free economy. They note its high taxes and expansive welfare state (with the resulting problems), but that doesn’t make it a socialist economy.

Next is “Starving Socialism” in Venezuela. The authors note that American Leftists were praising this country a decade ago. Now, however, the country is a nightmare, with plummeting incomes and rampant inflation. While Venezuela might be a poster child for socialism, it’s also Exhibit A for why socialism is inhumane.

Cuba is labeled “Subsistence Socialism.” It’s better than Venezuela. But the food is bland with so few available spices. Government hotels are run-down; private Airbnb-style housing is much better. Havana is famous for its 1950s American cars but that’s not nearly as glamorous as it sounds, with outrageous car prices and run-down rides. And there are no storefront signs. Even

poor market economies have advertising, but in Cuba, there’s little incentive to sell, since the state owns everything.

North Korea is “Dark Socialism” — named for the famous satellite photos that show how little light they have. Lawson and Powell have the same experience on the ground, as they look across the river from their hotel in China — into the utter darkness of a large North Korean city at night. We’ve seen a natural economic experiment over the 60 years in North and South Korea. If socialism is the experimental treatment, one can only recommend living in the control group.

China is “Fake Socialism” — with its big increases in capitalism and income over the past few decades. Russia and Ukraine are depicted as “Hungover Socialism” — better off since the fall of the USSR but still stuck with heavy doses of crony capitalism and statism. And Georgia is their example of the “New Capitalism” — a Soviet-bloc country that has many disadvantages but has embraced market reforms and is growing.

Throughout the book, the authors underline the importance of the “rule of law” for economic incentives and performance. They mention the history of mass murderers in Russian and Chinese 20th century socialist history. But they also bring repeated attention to the devastating correlations between reduced economic freedom, diminished civil liberties and social repression by government.

I was fortunate to visit Berlin with a friend before the Wall came down. East Berlin was the most impressive city in the Eastern Bloc. But compared to West Berlin, East Berlin was drab with little variety and a far-lower standard of living. We were walking around and my friend said, “This isn’t so bad.” I replied, “All you need to know is that they built a wall to keep these people in.”

While socialism could work in theory, the data indicate that people will be worse off — economically and socially — with socialism. It can be hoped that Lawson and Powell’s book will convince people to reject an economic system that has caused so much devastation and forgo

government solutions that look promising but usually fail.

Library 'Modernization'

Mark Franke, an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review, is formerly an associate vice chancellor at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.



(Dec. 12) — I have an obsession, no doubt an unhealthy one since it controls me and not I it. I love to read . . . all the time.

It is so bad that I never go anywhere without reading material just in case I have to wait for a few minutes. I actually keep a log of books I have read but I still find myself rereading something I read several years back . . . and not realizing it until I am halfway through the book. I listen to audio books whenever I am driving, mowing, walking (my concession to that nagging nurse from my Medicare insurance carrier) or doing most anything away from polite society. And don't ask my wife about the overstuffed bookshelves in my study.

This is not a confessional. I bring this up because of the strange and unwelcome things happening at my local public library.

I read about 200 books per year, most coming from library checkout. If libraries gave frequent flyer miles, I would be in the million miles club and entitled to free sandwiches and cocktails every time I dropped in.

Needless to say, I love my local county library, or at least try to. But they are making it difficult.

The first warning sign occurred several years back when they, and I have no idea who they are, decided to restrict holds to a limit of five books. A patron, as we hoi polloi are called at libraries everywhere, can still check out somewhere between 26 books, my personal maximum, and some unlimited number known only to the cognoscenti who work there.

So why the limit? I don't know but I heard from what I am sure is a reliable source that it was to put a screeching halt to the many

homeschoolers in my county who were reserving too many books.

Huh? One would think that a public library would assign a crack team of librarians to help homeschool parents obtain the reference materials necessary to educate their children. Not in my county, apparently.

I'm not a homeschooler, being in an age category politely called senior citizen, but this changed my reading habits for the worse. Instead of putting a long list of books on hold to be sent to my local branch (remember that I read about four books a week), I now must drive around the county to the appropriate branch to get what I want. Fortunately, I am now retired and no longer a productive contributor to the economy so I have plenty of time to do this, if not necessarily the gas money needed.

The next gut punch to old-timers such as me who like to hold real flesh-and-blood books was the library management's decision to cull the physical herd, so to speak, in favor of digital content. They began purging printed books from the collection, although they denied doing this according to a local newspaper report. But then they promised to stop doing it even though they weren't really doing it. Is Rod Serling our library director?

The latest modernization was to put in new software to run their catalog and patron accounts. Don't get me wrong, I understand why software needs to be upgraded regularly in our brave new world. But one week into its release, I think Titanic would be an appropriate metaphor from my perch here in geezerdom.

It took me three days to figure out how to get a new account established, even though I've had one for seemingly centuries. I think, and I can't be sure about this, I had to set my password before the system would let me pick my username. Everything seems to take more keystrokes to accomplish and several features I found useful are missing. I know I'm not Mr. Technology, but still . . .

If that weren't bad enough, the mobile app didn't come up with the main system for a handful

of days and that's where I keep my barcode, account info and lists of future books to request. Fortunately I found my plastic library card amidst a bunch of unused credit cards so I could conduct business in person.

I received several advance emails about the upgrade so I shouldn't have been surprised. If I read these correctly, the purpose of the whole thing was to improve privacy of our data. Now I have to admit that I haven't lost much sleep worrying about Al Qaeda terrorists or Russian mobsters downloading my checkout list. I'll gladly take simple and forego NSA grade security. At least I've learned to love my Kindle and I now spend more time on the Amazon book website than the library's.

Maybe I have become the quintessential curmudgeon but I don't know why it seems that every so called improvement makes my life more difficult. I guess I better get used to being dragged onward, kicking and screaming.

Not Your Grandfather's Party

(Dec. 10) — A recent column in the Washington Examiner magazine focused on a congressional candidate in Michigan running as a conservative Republican in a Republican district. No big news there except for the fact that the candidate comes from a low income, Latino, union family.

This is Michael J. Fox and "Family Ties" in real life.

It's not supposed to work like this, is it? The young are supposed to be more liberal than their parents, not more conservative. Conventional wisdom says Shane Hernandez in Michigan has to be an outlier on the political scene.

Maybe not. This same phenomenon can be observed here in my corner of Indiana. There was a time not so long ago when the rural townships of Allen County and several other counties were heavily Democrat. They were settled mainly by German immigrant farmers, the population not as mobile as sons took over farms from their fathers and stayed put. Non-farmers were nearly all blue collar skilled and unskilled factory workers. These

were the demographics that consistently voted Democrat from the days of the New Deal.

Then something changed. Farms consolidated, large factories closed and some out-migration began to occur in part due to first-generation college students. Even so, the basic make-up of the residents was mostly unchanged. But their politics were shifting demonstrably.

Perhaps it was the Reagan revolution. Recall that his election mystified the Beltway pundits by attracting young voters and blue collar workers in inexplicable numbers. Reagan's charisma aside, something else was going on as these solidly blue townships became more and more red.

I won't presume to extrapolate my observations over the entire nation or even Indiana. All I know is that the Democrats win precious few local offices in my corner of the state. Even though northeastern Indiana voted consistently for the Republican presidential candidate, with only Harry Truman in 1948 and Lyndon Johnson in 1964 polling Democrat pluralities, this didn't necessarily bleed over to local elections. Post-World War II election results show many Democrat winners and aggressively contested elections. Compare this to 2018 when all 12 county commissioner races in northeast Indiana were won by Republicans, nine without a Democrat opponent.

We haven't changed; the party platforms (and rhetoric) have.

Allow me to recount a conversation that happened in my own family. To state my bona fides, I grew up in a blue-collar Democratic household with farming ancestors going up several genealogical lines. Yet, three of four siblings, all college educated, are now conservatives who vote Republican.

My father gave me some insight into what happened one night in 1988. We were all together and the topic became the presidential election between George H. W. Bush and Michael Dukakis. Dad sermonized on what he believed. When he was finished, I asked if he was going to vote Republican for the first time in his life. I told him

that he had essentially recited the Republican platform.

He was offended. He planned to vote for Dukakis the Democrat because the Democrats were for the “little man.” It was an exercise in futility to explain that the governmental policies he favored to help the little man were what the Republicans were promising. No matter; he still thought of the New Deal Democrats he remembered from growing up during the Depression.

A friend of like age has a similar anecdote about one of his elderly family members. She told him how much she liked the 1968 Democratic nominee’s convention speech. The problem was she had listened to George Wallace not George McGovern. My friend had no better luck explaining this disconnect to his aunt than I did with my father.

My friend’s aunt and my Dad hadn’t changed. Their political party had. A sharp leftward turn left many of the party’s generational voters in the dust. They liked what Ronald Reagan said and did while becoming worried if not frightened of what the Democrats were saying.

My Dad and others of his generation just hadn’t realized this yet. I can’t imagine the cognitive dissonance he would be suffering today if he were still alive and watching the Democrat presidential debates.

Being described as “a basket of deplorables” only interested “in our guns and our religion” doesn’t meet the How to Win Friends and Influence People test among my relatives and neighbors, blue- or white-collar ones. It certainly does explain why we vote the way we do, irrespective of how our grandparents voted.

Moderate Democrats no longer have any incentive to run for local office here. The same probably can be said for any kind of Republican in most large metro areas.

As we devolve into two entirely separate, one-party nations, our republic sadly continues to weaken. But that is a topic for another day.

A Beer Away from the NBA

(Dec. 6) — When I was nine years old, my career goal was to play center field for the New York Yankees after Mickey Mantle retired. Then I got bifocals and couldn’t figure out which ball coming toward me to swing at.

No problem. Moving up to fifth grade the next year made me eligible to be on my school’s basketball team. This was big because there were still memories in Fort Wayne of the Pistons before they moved to Detroit, Indiana University and Notre Dame played their annual game in Fort Wayne, and there was Hoosier Hysteria with real sectional basketball tournaments.

As I progressed to eighth grade with hopes of being in the starting lineup, I noticed that most of the other boys had grown to almost six feet tall while I was stuck at just barely clearing five feet — shorter than everyone, including the girls.

Now I learn that I abandoned my budding basketball career much too soon. The Wall Street Journal recently had a feature article about Andre Drummond, center for the erstwhile Fort Wayne Pistons, who significantly improved his game by adding one thing to his diet. Are you ready for this? Beer!

Mr. Drummond experimented with all the fad diets that athletes, and we mortals, fall for. This is especially true for very tall centers like Drummond who are now being pushed by their teams to lose weight in order to improve their jumping ability. He tried skipping breakfast but found that a bad idea for an athlete who worked out every morning. Something had to change.

His solution was to drink a beer every day at lunch. What could be better than that?

The article didn’t say who suggested Drummond add beer to his diet but it seems to have worked. He returned to fall camp slimmer and faster and has been posting scoring and rebounding numbers not seen since the 1970s.

I can see only one flaw in his dietary plan; he limits his consumption to just one. This seems to me to be an excessively doctrinaire approach to this. If a single beer produced such an

improvement, wouldn't a few more each day make him the best center ever?

Now, I am German Lutheran so beer is figuratively and literally in my blood. What I didn't know is that I have been in an NBA training regimen for quite some time. But apparently neither did the Pistons as they never invited me to camp during these years. Their loss.

Still, a few barriers stand in the way of my getting an NBA contract.

First, I'm 68 years old. I think the NBA has a rule against active players being on Medicare rather than the league health insurance. Second, while I am no longer only 5'0" in height, my current 6'1" is not deal for an NBA center.

Most important, adding a beer to my lunch cuisine hasn't increased my vertical to any appreciable extent. Perhaps I'm drinking the wrong brand? I am German so I won't give up on this. After all, I have science on my side, don't I? ♦

The Constitution, Fully Understood

The foundation in cooperation with Hillsdale College is sponsoring the first of what we hope will be a statewide series of Constitution Study Groups. This first session will be held June 19-20 in Fort Wayne. The group, meeting at The Chapel, 2505 West Hamilton Road South, is organized



in conjunction with the foundation's "Foehold" project and is free to its membership, meals included. Registration will be on a first-come basis, so to save your seat please send an email to "Constitution," director@inpolicy.org, with your full name, home address and phone number.

"The purpose of the group is to create a network of Fort Wayne citizens knowledgeable about the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence," said James Riley, Ph.D., the project coordinator and a Hillsdale associate.

The group will meet in two sessions, the first on June 19 from 6 p.m. until 8:30 p.m., and the second session the next day, June 20 from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., both at The Chapel. Participants, prior to discussion, will view selected DVD short lectures from the Hillsdale Constitution 101 course presented by the Hillsdale College faculty.

The Constitution Study Group topics represent the content presented in the Hillsdale College formal degree program. Participants have the option of going on-line and taking the Constitution 101 lecture quizzes at their convenience to qualify for a Hillsdale Certificate of Completion.

If you cannot attend these first free sessions, please consider a new or extended membership to the foundation at <https://inpolicy.org/membership/> as a way of helping us offer these study groups to as many in Indiana as possible.

The Franke Bookshelf

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Socialism Sucks

I have this rule to avoid books that use either profanity or obscenity in their titles, with good cause. They generally double down on the offensive language once inside, no doubt to cover up the writing and thinking deficiencies of the authors. But I made an exception to this rule, and am quite glad I did. “Socialism Sucks: Two Economists Drink Their Way through the Unfree World” (Regnery Publishing, 2019) by two rather irreverent Texans named Robert Lawson and Benjamin Powell has me reconsidering my *liborum prohibitorum*.

I admit the beer glasses on the cover had something to do with it, but the main reason was the publishing house, one that I have come to trust to print books worth the intellectual heavy lifting required.

Still, the obscenities within are not totally gratuitous but still could have been avoided. Enough grousing, and on to the book.

Lawson and Powell are unreconstructed libertarians, strong free market economists but also holding to extreme libertarian views on such things as totally open borders. Even so, their rather earthy condemnation of socialism of every stripe is made in a pithy way such that laymen will get the point. The point being . . . socialism sucks. (Sorry.)

The authors set out on a world tour of the garbage dumps and hell holes that socialism leaves behind and give

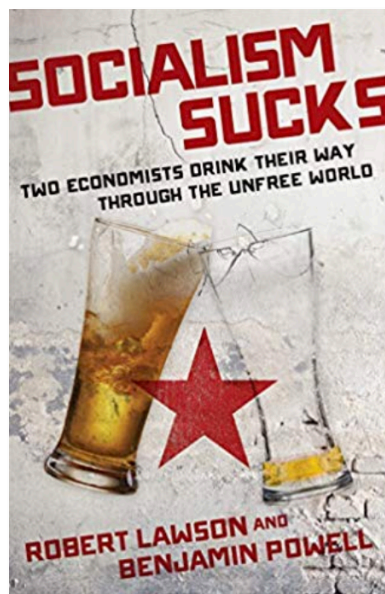
a tourist’s view of why, or mostly why not, you will want to travel there. Make no mistake; you certainly won’t want to live in any of these places, except perhaps for the ex-Soviet republic of Georgia which is hurtling into the world of free markets.

They travel through Venezuela, Cuba and North Korea and see the horrendous human cost of socialism writ large. Actually, they just looked at North Korea from across the border for the most part, wisely not wanting to become permanent guests of the Supreme Leader. These are the worst cases, to be sure, but they are also the nations that proudly proclaim their socialist orthodoxy.

It is the chapter titles that tell the story: Venezuela is Starving Socialism, Cuba is Subsistence Socialism and North Korea is Dark Socialism.

The tour starts in Sweden, the chapter entitled Not Socialism. In spite of the tantrums thrown by AOC, the Bern and Mayor Pete, the authors make it clear that Sweden is not now nor never really was a socialist country. It is a capitalist economy that is heavily taxed to support a social welfare or nanny state, to steal from Margaret Thatcher, that recently awakened from its over-indulgence with a hangover and a New Year’s Day type of “we can’t do this anymore” resolution.

In fact, the chapter on Russia and Ukraine is entitled Hungover Socialism to describe those nations’ lurch-like attempts to allow markets while preserving the economic power of former Soviet apparatchiks. More successful at this hybrid approach is China, called Fake Socialism to recognize the fact that markets work at the village level as well as for the plutocrats. They really didn’t get into the western regions or Tibet, whose inhabitants might beg to disagree with the rose-colored glasses worn by the



authors, but their analysis indicates why China represents both our major competitor and a key trading partner.

This is a serious book not written in a serious style. That's what makes it so useful. You don't need a Ph.D. in economics, or even a lowly B.S. like mine, to understand things in glorious black and white. For example, they have their own ranking scale for these economies, one based on the quality and quantity of the beer selection. Hint to travelers: You don't want to go to North Korea on a beer-tasting excursion.

For the coup de gras they end the book attending a convention of American socialists and discover, no surprise here, that most don't understand what socialism really is. Their interviewees equated socialism with abortion rights, free immigration or whatever the current left-wing gospel dictates. An economic system wherein the government owns all the means of production? Huh? There were a few true socialists there, many apparently from my generation but certainly not from the Millennial herd. That newest "best generation ever" is supporting something they don't understand or really believe in but there you go. My student loans forgiven! Free tuition! Feel the Bern, baby! I despair . . .

Anyone who reads this book and still advocates more socialism needs to be . . . well, put on the ballot for the Democrat presidential nomination. Others, though, need not apply.

Recommendation: Hayek's "Road to Serfdom" for the MSNBC and CNN crowd. Good primer for the Fox News groupies as well so they can at least hold their own at cocktail parties or in the neighborhood pub.

The Great Reversal

Why does cell phone service in America cost so much more than in Europe? That question sets the stage for Thomas Philippon's "The

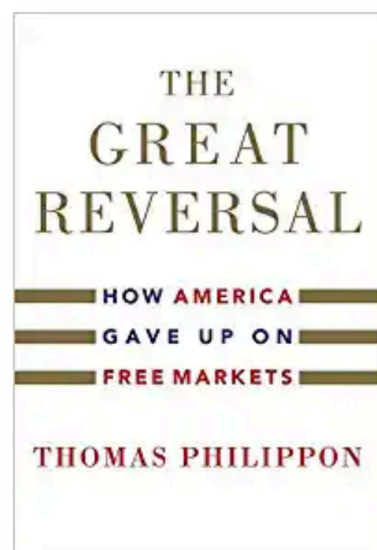
Great Reversal: How America Gave up on Free Markets" (Harvard University Press, 2019). Philippon, a French-born economist at New York University and self-styled free market liberal, takes on conventional economic wisdom with an iconoclastic fervor that bears notice.

To Philippon it's all about the data. He takes his reader down a data-intensive path to tilt at sacred-cow windmills, such as the rate of innovation, worker longevity with a single employer and the frequency of IPOs. The data he studied put the lie to what we believe about these phenomena. In short what we believe is wrong, at least according to Philippon.

He sets up six hypotheses to test against market data, focusing on degree of concentration and market power affecting price levels and the extent that free entry into markets is constrained. He tests each of these hypotheses as he reviews market data from multiple perspectives. It's not exactly a slog, but the reader needs to be comfortable with data flying at him from every direction.

An underlying theme across Philippon's book is the economic concept of rent-seeking. He explains the tendency toward market concentration as the natural incentive for market power's being used to achieve and increase rents, the excess profits resulting from non-competitive practices — often government sanctioned or imposed — that restrict market entry and price competition. He doesn't like them any more than members of this foundation do.

He concludes that American markets have become more concentrated over the past 20 years, from the bottom up based on a decrease in the market entry rate of new businesses and from the top down due to increased mergers and acquisitions allowed by sympathetic regulators. The result is an increase in corporate profits at the expense of consumers, which he attributes to successful rent-



seeking. This conclusion is reached in the first third of the book. He then turns to Europe for comparison. Why Europe? Philippon believes that despite the many differences between the U.S. and the E. U., they are more alike than different due in large part to Europe's deliberate efforts to model what it saw as strengths in the American economic system.

He is a fan of the European Union and its bureaucracy. He sees these multi-national regulators as less susceptible to national pressure and therefore more objective. While Philippon stresses he is anti-regulation on balance because of its being used by rent seekers, he still favors it as the best system for maintaining free markets. To be fair, he does support his opinion with data from industries such as airlines and telecom but I still find it hard to swallow given the apparent omnipotence of the Brussels officialdom. He states that he doesn't believe that Europe is better than America for economic opportunity, just better at maintaining free markets.

After taking on the telecommunication and airline industries to make his case for European superiority in free markets, he devotes chapters at the end of the book that explain why Americans pay too much for health care and banking services. The cause: lobbyists in the employ of rent seekers, of course. He traces how several large American firms significantly increased their Washington-based presence with good success. I can't argue with that but still find it hard to believe Europe is the model we want here.

Philippon is confusing in his use of the term profits. He is not anti-profit but at times he uses it as synonymous with rents, that area of the demand-supply graph that reduces consumer surplus. This could mislead the casual reader, although I can't conceive of a casual reader sticking with this math-heavy book.

I also had difficulty with his discourse on corporate tax rates, which he charges is rife with tax evasion. I learned in an advanced accounting class that tax evasion, which is illegal, is different from tax avoidance, which is intelligent tax return preparation. He uses the term "legal tax evasion"

which my old tax accounting professor would consider an oxymoron. He favors lower rates in exchange for fewer special interest exemptions and deductions, but he is not happy with the U. S. tax treatment of expropriation of international profits.

What I found most intriguing is Philippon's analysis of the market power of the GAFAMs—Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft. This is one more example of conventional wisdom being more conventional than wise. Philippon demonstrates, with data and graphs of course, that concentration based on total market capitalization is no different today than in earlier periods when the star companies were firms such as AT&T, General Motors, General Electric and IBM. The comparative difference today is that the GAFAMs, Amazon being the only exception in the group, lag significantly in total employment and purchases from other companies. This, in Philippon's mind, makes them less economically powerful and less potentially disruptive than those post-WWII manufacturing behemoths.

The book concludes with a discussion of monopsony power in the labor market and online platforms. Now monopsony is not something mentioned much and probably almost no one knows what it is. Philippon's argument is that labor market concentration has increased over the past decades, pointing to franchising agreements and occupational licensing. He also points to the increasing gap between highly educated workers and those without advanced credentials leading to, you guessed it, income inequality. (Having spent my career in higher educational administration, I always got a kick out of progressive professors decrying income inequality while helping us recruit more students with the promise that a college degree will provide them with a much higher income than everyone else. Only in America.)

Philippon concludes with a simple macroeconomic model that attempts to calculate what American workers have lost in annual income due to decreased competition. His model tells him that our gross domestic product would

increase by \$1 trillion per year while the labor share of GDP would be \$1.5 trillion dollars higher if the U. S. had maintained truly competitive markets. I'll leave it to one of this foundation's academic economists to validate that.

One nice feature of the book is Philippon's inclusion of multiple sidebar articles that are really lectures in basic economic theory. The consumer price index, Tobin's law of investment and unit-labor cost are just three concepts to get this treatment, welcome to someone like me who has been out of school for close to 50 years and in need of a refresher. He also adds a useful glossary at the end.

Recommendation: Certainly not for the math-adverse or anyone who hated Econ 101, but it would be time well spent for policy wonks and serious economic thinkers.

Forged Through Fire

How's this for a provocative thesis? The advance of democracy throughout history has been enabled in large part through warfare. So argue John Ferejohn and Frances McCall Rosenbluth in "Forged Through Fire: War, Peace, and the Democratic Bargain" (W. W. Norton and Company, 2017).

The authors, professors of law and political science respectively, make their case by using historical examples beginning with ancient Athens and ending with modern America. Their way stops include the Roman Republic, the barbarian kingdoms of the Dark Ages, centralization in France and Spain over against fragmentation in medieval Germany, democratic experiments in the Italian city-states of the Middle Ages and finally the two world wars of the twentieth century. Tucked in there is a fascinating history of Switzerland's emergence as a confederation due in large part to its rugged geography that

protected small democracies in the mountain valleys.

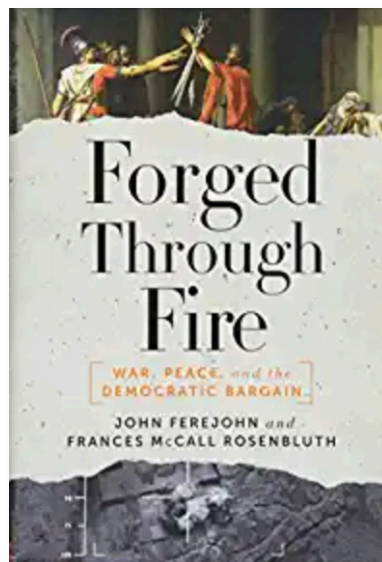
The philosophical foundation for the book is laid out in the introduction with a discussion of Aristotle's taxonomy of government by the one, the few and the many and its mixed forms. They also explain Polybius' cyclical theory of constitutional forms, which posits a circular flow following this pattern: monarchy gives way to tyranny which gives way to aristocracy then to oligarchy, democracy and mob rule before returning to monarchy.

The repetitive tension occurs as government in times of war needs military service or increased tax support and must franchise more voters to get this. While the military threat is extant, the common man is best positioned to bargain his service and taxes for an enhanced role in governance. Take Great Britain for an example. Universal manhood suffrage (as well as voting rights for most women) was not promulgated until the horrendous financial and human cost of World War I left the realm destitute.

Other examples abound in this book. Republican Rome, a subject of my own intense study, gave the citizen assemblies more and more authority as more and more of them died on the battlefield. It was the Consul Marius' reforms in about 100 B. C. opening military service to the lowest classes rather than restricting it to land-owning farmers that irrevocably weakened the aristocratic nature of the republic.

The last chapter of the book presents a military history of the United States with parallel histories of franchise expansion, particularly for black Americans. It is not coincidence, the authors suggest, that the civil rights movement followed on the integration of American armed forces after the world wars.

But history also shows exceptions to the thesis. During the Middle Ages warfare tended



to be restricted to small but heavily armed forces, most from the noble classes. Kings could buy this service with money and didn't need to woo their peasants to fight. The franchise did not advance during this period like before and after.

The rise of modern economies focused on internal and external trade affected the balance as well. The authors do a wonderful job of explaining the relationship between the need for peace to promote commerce while meeting the needs of armies with voracious appetites for peasant class infantry.

Ferejohn and Rosenblut point to the nineteenth century as the “pivot point” on the warfare-democracy continuum. (Forgive me for mixing metaphors.) The Industrial Revolution gave workers bargaining power as capitalists needed labor in competition with government's need for mobilization. Each assumes a higher level of technology and a trained workforce. A truce between capital and labor offered a safe haven for democratic polities, something still true today. Compare the free market world to socialist and other command economies.

The concluding chapter, like the introductory one, is worth the time spent as it recapitulates the history of democracy with several graphs. The axes of the different graphs are fascinating. One plots historical governments into quadrants based on their wealth and their physical protection. For instance England and the Dutch are in the quadrant labeled property rights due to their relative isolation and commercial activity. There is another graph comparing democratic depth (how much each citizen participates) with width (the number who participate). I particularly like the stair step diagram that starts with Republican Rome and goes down to feudalism and then back up through monarchy to modern democracy. The authors are forced to concede that their

model is no longer workable. It broke down in the World War II and Cold War periods as the dictatorial regimes—Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia and Communist China — successfully mobilized large armies through coercion and less democracy rather than more. Today's military stage, in which the actors are small professional armies of volunteers and mercenaries, puts the final nail in the thesis' coffin.

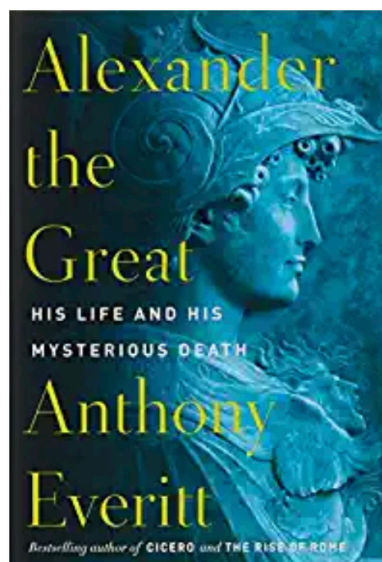
Broken today or not, the model does give an interesting perspective on 2,400 years of human history.

Recommendation: Intriguing but not a casual read. Best for those who like to think deeply about forms of government.

Alexander the Great

One of my favorite historians of the classical period is Anthony Everitt, who is actually a former professor of performing arts rather than a true academic historian. I have read his histories of ancient Athens and the republic of Rome as well as his excellent biographies of Cicero and Augustus. So it was only a matter of time before Everitt got around to writing a biography of one history's true military geniuses. “Alexander the Great: His Life and Mysterious Death” (Random House, 2019) is a study of Alexander's military career as well as his personality. Perhaps I should use personalities in its plural form, as Everitt

traces the conqueror's noble and generous nature as it morphs into something disquieting, given to revengeful rages and apparent self-apotheosis. The book begins and ends with Alexander's suspicious death in Babylon and the immediate jockeying for power among his key generals to rule all or part of a huge empire. Everitt presents the case for both scenarios, natural death due to disease and deliberate poisoning by disgruntled generals, and comes down on the side of natural



death. He also summarizes by focusing on Alexander's long-lasting impact in spreading Greek culture and uniting disparate cultures. Decent maps, genealogies and timelines round out an excellent work.

Recommendation: Strongly recommended, as is any of Everitt's histories.

Dividing the Spoils

While Alexander is interesting, I am much more fascinated by the period immediately following his untimely death. Known as the Diadochi or Successors era running from approximately 323 B. C. to 279 B. C., the struggle to replace Alexander as the ruler of the known world involved nearly all his senior generals and six numbered wars amongst them. I read several books on the Diadochi but the one I recommend is "Dividing the Spoils: The War for Alexander the Great's Empire" (Oxford University Press, 2011) by Robin Waterfield. The author's previous works have been translations of Greek classics as well as Athenian histories. Make no mistake; this is a confusing period to the casual reader as many of the Macedonians had the same or similar names, let alone their penchant for forming and breaking alliances with each other. Waterfield writes with an easy prose that helps keeps the characters straight and the geography clear. He ends his story once Seleucus and Ptolemy have established respectively their Middle Eastern and Egyptian dynasties and a grandson of Antigonus is firmly entrenched in the Greek-Macedonian homeland. All other erstwhile Diadochi, approximately a dozen or so, are either dead or exiled.

Recommendation: Unqualified, especially for those who like the ancient era but can't keep all these Macedonians straight.

The League

I can't say that I am a true sports fan other than baseball, which is ordained by God. But I do like reading sports history if it covers my childhood era or before. "The League: How Five Rivals Created the NFL and Launched a Sports Empire" (Basic Books, 2018) by former

sportswriter John Eisenberg is one such. Tracing the careers of Art Rooney, George Halas, Tim Mara, George Marshall Preston and Bert Bell as key NFL owners in the league's early years, Eisenberg recounts the incredible competitiveness of these titans while emphasizing that it was their cooperation on key issues that saved the NFL from early death. Issues such as rules changes, amateur player drafts, competition from other erstwhile professional football leagues, black players and television caused these five to come together for the good of the league in spite of personal cost. At any of these critical turning points, self-interest could have ruined the league, yet these men took a utilitarian attitude, sometimes at competitive and financial loss to themselves. The book focuses on the league's first several decades of the 1920's through the post-WWII years as professional football faced an uphill battle against the college game as well as widely popular professional sports such as baseball, horse racing and boxing. Owners would lend each other funds to meet payrolls, even agree to disadvantageous schedule changes to help a weaker team sell more tickets—"taking one for the team" approach in a real sense.

Recommendation: More a business book than a sports one but an easy read. I also recommend Eisenberg's other NFL-based histories.

Sam Houston and the Alamo Avengers

It suddenly occurred to me that I had never read a history of Texas' war for independence from Mexico. Fortunately Brian Kilmeade, an author I have read in the past, recently released "Sam Houston and the Alamo Avengers: The Texas Victory That Changed American History" (Penguin Random House, 2019), a readable survey of the that brief war. Focusing mostly on Sam Houston, the book still covers other aspects of the war including, of course, the iconic last stand at the Alamo. Houston's pre-Texas life is reviewed with emphasis on his relationship with Andrew Jackson, a friendship that ultimately resulted in Texas' voluntary annexation into the United States. I wouldn't

classify this as a military history since the tactical details military historians look for aren't sufficiently covered. Other key Texas founders are brought into the story either due to their transactions with Houston or independent of him.

Recommendation: Worthwhile for the general reader as well as avocational historians like me.

Frederick the Wise and John Frederick the Magnanimous

Among the lesser lights of the Protestant Reformation were the Electors of Saxony that encouraged and protected Martin Luther and dozens of other evangelicals against both Pope and Emperor. They tend to be shunted to the side in part because German imperial and dynastic politics are too confusing for most to understand.

Two recent biographies have refocused well-deserved attention on these electors. "Frederick the Wise: Seen and Unseen Lives of Martin Luther's Protector" (Concordia Publishing House, 2015) by Sam Wellman is the first full-length biography in English for this critical player. Wellman does a more than creditable job in explaining how Saxony achieved its preeminence

among German principalities and how the forceful yet quiet personality of Frederick III kept the Reformation alive and Germany intact through his deft political maneuvering. John Frederick the Magnanimous: Defender of Martin Luther and Hero of the Reformation (Concordia Publishing House, 2018) was originally compiled from source documents as an annotated bibliography by George Mentz in 1903 and translated to English by James Langebartels.

It is not a biography in the traditional sense as it ends with John Frederick's assumption of the electoral seat in 1532, but it is an excellent compilation of what he was doing and thinking as he came of age and assumed increasing responsibility from his uncle Frederick and then his father, Frederick's brother John the Steadfast.

One hopes Langebartels finishes his translation effort, although things end tragically for this enthusiastic and industrious prince.

Recommendation: Strong endorsement for "Frederick the Wise" for anyone even remotely interested in the period but John Frederick is best left to scholars or medieval nerds like me. ♦

ACCORDING TO ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE, "when inequality is the common law of a society, the strongest inequalities do not strike the eye; when everything is nearly on a level, the least of them wound it. That is why the desire for equality always becomes more insatiable as equality is greater."

A subtle moral psychologist, de Tocqueville knew there is much more to equality than equality under law and equal opportunity.

People want to matter in the eyes of others, and since it is inevitably a comparative process, the desire for recognition produces a lot of resentment and envy. Hence the tireless bean counters who, whether it's the Harvard Philosophy Department, the Nobel Prize in Literature, the Academy Awards, or whatever, are forever complaining about the number of "underrepresented" minorities, women, gays, and so forth. Such phenomena may seem strange, but if de Tocqueville is right, they follow from the "insatiable" perspective that characterizes the democratic age, in contrast to the aristocratic one.

Given people's unequal abilities, freedom not only produces inequality; it depends on inequality: You cannot have a free people if the government won't let them be the unequal creatures they are, but rather intervenes in their affairs in order to "correct" these for equality's sake. — *Christopher DeGroot in the March 6, 2020, Taki's Magazine*



Thomas Hoepker, Sept. 11, 2001

The Outstater

Your Supermajority at Work

“So this is how liberty dies . . . with thunderous applause.” — Sen. Padme Amidala in Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge of Sith

(Feb. 20) — Would you say your district representative is reasonably conservative, that is, conversant with the founding principles of Indiana and the nation? If so, you would be wrong.

The proof is passage last week of a measure that traps citizens of two counties in a modern-day fiefdom, detached from either constitutional protections for the individual or the accountability of open democracy — a situation that could be duplicated anywhere in Indiana at political whim. And yes, the vote was unanimous, not a single Republican standing against it.

Earlier, acting on the same medieval assumption that government creates wealth, and big regional government creates even more wealth, GOP Mayor Scott Fadness of Fishers and other central Indiana mayors were lobbying for similar economic-development models. These, too, would make directly elected city councils fiscally superfluous statewide. They have plenty of GOP backing in the Legislature.

As a matter of policy we do not support or oppose specific pieces of legislation. We do,

however, try to warn our membership of the debilitating, often terrifying, plans being hatched at the Statehouse. And as one of these measures heads to the Senate without a whimper of opposition, we can quote our friend Ken Davidson, editor of the Northwest Indiana Gazette:

“The Legislature is in session and that means state Rep. Ed Soliday is busy expanding the power of the unelected Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) at the expense of local government. Over the past several years, the RDA has been given authority to create ‘Super TIF’ transit development districts, to take property by eminent domain and to delegate all authority to act from the board to the staff, thus avoiding any transparency.”

Davidson, who holds a law degree, listed for us the new powers that he believes would be given to the authority:

- The power to delegate authority to an undisclosed not-for-profit, presumably including the power of eminent domain.
- Expand the RDA to force representation from LaPorte and St. Joseph counties.
- Creating a statewide “residential housing program,” basically a residential Tax Increment Finance district (TIF) within a transit development district without regard to the market studies required of other entities and without the input of affected school districts, which will lose funding to the TIF.
- Exempting RDA internal communications from disclosure under the Public Records Act.

“This bill has received little attention, and residents of LaPorte and St. Joseph Counties may have no idea that they are being dragged into the RDA,” Davidson says. “Both counties rejected RDA membership in the past and are now being forced into an institutionally corrupt organization.”

We wonder what will happen elsewhere in Indiana when a legislatively empowered, unelected private board decides that some



It's difficult to tell from his expression whether Gov. Eric Holcomb knows that the woman in this photo, taken ahead of the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak, is president of the Chinese Communist front group targeting U.S.

governors and state-level politicians in an attempt to influence policy here. Secretary of State Mike

Pompeo warned at the Feb. 8 meeting of the National Governors Association that the group maintains a list of U.S. governors ranking them as to their usefulness. Pompeo said the warning was issued after he received an invitation from a former governor to attend a state-level event that promised economic opportunities with China. The event was run by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the front group represented in the photo, which is the public face of the Chinese Communist Party's official foreign influence agency, the United Front Work Department. *(A tip of the hat to Ken Davidson of the Northwest Indiana Gazette)*

rationale or another justifies taking your property, creating new taxes and generally finds it expedient to work around constitutional protections and democratic processes.

Clearly, you won't be able to count on your legislator, flag pin in his lapel or not, to shield you from the travesty that this supermajority has become.

True Crime

"This recent shooting took place in a food desert area. We must take the blinders off and recognize that if the city continues to ignore the core problems, the gun violence will be the new normal." — statement from the Baptist Minister's Alliance and the Concerned Clergy of Indianapolis following a quadruple murder this week

(Feb. 6) — The Indianapolis Star has wrapped up a year-long series of articles on crime. The series carried the snappy title, "The Toll," the kind of journalistic product written primarily for the eyes of the Pulitzer Committee. That is, it covers every aspect of the subject that is politically correct, ignores the rest and recommends some new law or policy.

But murdering your neighbor is already against not only Indiana law but every social and

code and more of any state or nation. It has been for a long time. (Yes, the ancient Norse were allowed to kill their neighbor if they could afford the fine, but we will not be distracted here.)

The issue overlooked by the Star is this: Can Indiana cities summon the resources and the will — mostly the political will — to do something about it.

A friend sends me a heartfelt open letter from an Indianapolis pastor. It reads: "Indy, in the last 89 days 177 people have been shot, 59 people have been stabbed and 51 people have been killed. In the first 37 days of 2020, Indy, we have had 24 criminal homicides. Indy, we have a public-safety crisis, and we must address this together. We cannot ignore this fact."

It is dollars to donuts, however, that the pastor has joined others in his community in insisting on a solution that does not involve the impolite arrest or even questioning of suspects in numbers disproportionate to the demographic makeup of the city generally.

In the case of Indianapolis, those proportions at the last census were 62 percent white, 28 percent black and the rest "other."

Hypothetically then, police in the most dangerous area of the city, investigating the most serious crimes, could question less than a quarter

of the suspects-witnesses if they hope to defend themselves against political criticism for “profiling” or engaging in “stop-and-frisk,” let alone an old fashioned dragnet. That leaves a lot of homicidal recidivism wandering around out there.

Let’s narrow it down further. As an old police reporter, I have never known a policeman who wasn’t trying straightforwardly to do his or her job, to honor the oath with the time and resources available. Prosecutors, though, are a different matter.

They fancy themselves clever enough to do the back-of-the-hand calculation that it would be cheapest and easiest to hold hands with some pastors and bemoan a spike in murder statistics. It is certainly easier than: 1) drilling down into the evidence; 2) pursuing full prosecution regardless of the race of the defendant; 3) campaigning for the staff and money to do the job; and 4) taking the resultant public beating from the local media and activists, one that will likely attract a well-financed opponent in the next election.

So, best case, plea-bargain down to a drug or weapons offense. Isn’t that why we have drug and weapons offenses — as bargaining chips to get prosecutors off the political hook?

OK, This too serious for sarcasm. A family friend who lives in one of those dangerous places tells a story. He can sometime tell it without tears. His son died some months ago walking home after drinking beers with a friend, only a few blocks away from the safety of the home in which he was born. He was killed in a shooting, a random shooting, not even a robbery.

IndyPolitics reported in “Murder by the Numbers” that that 50 percent of the identified murder suspects in its sample had a previous weapons arrest, 70 percent had a previous drug arrest and 65 percent had a previous crimes-against-persons arrest.

With such bad company, maybe our friend’s son shouldn’t have been walking home alone at that time of night? Had discrimination prevented him from getting a better job so he could move to a safer neighborhood? And what about the killers?

What were the root causes of their anger? Did the shooting occur in a food desert? Had there been sufficiently funded peer initiatives to help deescalate conflict? How about investment in grassroots organizations? Were the assailants troubled, emotionally scarred in various ways? Abused maybe?

Who cares? It is no comfort to our friend that a legal system allowing murderers to run loose is sensitive to the plight of the less privileged or emotionally troubled. This is life and death, not juice break at yoga class. He lost his only son.

If a summary is needed it is that there is no reason — no reason — that any section of our city should be less safe than any other section. That holds regardless of the resources that must be reallocated and refocused on the high-crime areas, and regardless of what that might do to the racial balance of a particular night’s police blotter.

And we needn’t wait for the Indy Star to win a Pulitzer to get started.

Feeding the Stakeholders

(Feb. 4) — Gov. Eric Holcomb will host the first Indiana Global Economic Summit in Indianapolis this spring. Some are calling it the “Hoosier Davos,” after the annual global economic forum held this last year in fabulous Dubai.

They seem to be serious.

The governor and his secretary of commerce are expected to display an array of incentives, tax breaks and grants, intended to affect a company’s decisions about business location, expansion or job retention in Indiana.

The first problem with the type of economic development that Holcomb envisions is that it involves many “public-private partnerships” guided by many more “stakeholders.”

Please know that those are dangerous words that defy definition. Indeed, to paraphrase Hermann Goering, when you hear one or the other of them you should reach for your Luger.

The “public” seems to mean the government and the “private” seems to be the economy, the two of which cannot be brought into partnership

anywhere outside the pages of Karl Marx's manifesto.

And the "stakeholders" don't seem to actually have a stake, i.e., investment, other than their political connection to the public-private partners.

The second problem is the difficulty in measuring the cost-benefit of such development programs. The beneficiaries, politically selected, are loath to say whether they would have invested without the tax rebate, government loan, tax increment financing district, or whatever else might be in the governor's "economic toolbox."

Government is aware of this problem and has over the years attempting to apply "but for" clauses to what are otherwise merely corporate welfare programs. These claim to separate those companies that would not have developed or invested "but for" a public-private partnership — a sultan's charter, some might say.

Now comes an intrepid scholar from the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, Timothy Bartik, who thinks he has the answer, and it will not please the governor.

Based on a review of 34 estimates of "but for" percentages, from 30 different studies, Bartik's survey of the academic literature would predict that the typical incentive offered by the governor would result in from only 2 percent to 25 percent making a decision favoring Indiana that they would not have made in any case — and at incalculable cost.

It follows that at least 75 percent of the incited firms given tax rebates or outright cash grants (or the more complex tax-guaranteed loans and bonds) would have made a similar decision location-expansion-retention decision without the incentive. Yes, as if the vision of a "Hoosier Davos" had never sprung from the governor's crony-capitalist imagination.

Even the most junior vice-president of your neighborhood bank could break

down that percentage range even further, placing those beneficiaries with obvious ties to the local community near the 2 percent mark.

The applicants falling near the top 25 percent mark would be outstate corporations unabashedly shopping for government suckers — er, partners.

'Music Man' Economics

(Jan. 22) — There hasn't been anything like this since the New Deal — a policy position so popular, so appealing in every way, and so utterly untenable. It is targeted economic development or eco-devo, a collection of impossible schemes that would make FDR blush.

Local and state governments are spending \$70 billion a year nationally on such targeted incentives. Given that level of investment it is

Doing the Tax-Incentive Flop

Perhaps there's no government policy or program that's as widely reviled, yet universally pursued, as tax incentives. Study after study demonstrates that when states and cities give out tax breaks to companies looking to relocate or expand, they typically get very limited bang for their bucks, if any. Yet such incentives remain central to development strategies in most jurisdictions.

A study published last summer found that three-quarters of local economic development dollars are devoted to tax incentives, with the amount spent on them tripling since the 1990s.

"There's still a lot of economic development brainpower devoted to the Amazon HQ2, let's-win-the-lottery approach," says John Lettieri, president and CEO of the Economic Innovation Group, a research and advocacy firm.

The big, swing-for-the-fences deals — the pursuit of Amazon HQ2, Wisconsin's \$4 billion deal with Foxconn, the Taiwanese electronics manufacturer — hardly ever pay off as promised. But run-of-the-mill incentive packages often turn out to be mistakes, as well. — *Alan Greenblatt in the Feb. 26, 2020, Governing magazine*

surprising there is a city anywhere in the U.S. not rolling in dough.

Add it up yourself. You can recognize it in the minutes of your council meeting as tax incentives, job-development, retraining tax credits, tax abatements, infrastructure financing, tax increment financing, outright grants and loans or bonds backed by public funds.

We all know what these policies promise but has anybody followed up, actually measured cost effectiveness, return on investment, how a city is changed politically and economically — or, to pick up a “Music Man” theme, determined whether the musical instruments ever arrived?

Indeed they have, and no they haven’t, not right here in River City or anywhere else.

Our staff has been unable to find a published, independent, cited study in Indiana or elsewhere that supports using public funds for targeted economic incentives. Not one.

Now, there may be a supporting study out there somewhere, for we have not completed a full survey of the scholarly literature. From what we have seen, though, it would be dwarfed by the stack of research to the contrary. At the end of this article there is a partial listing of pertinent papers assembled by Matthew Mitchell of George Mason University.

To be clear, we are looking for evidence of general economic benefit beyond the political lives of the ribbon-cutters on a city council.

What is often passed off as science during the early stages of an eco-devo campaign are consulting studies. These are commissioned by the city or the prospective developers. The authors, although often qualified, have an incentive (fees) to error on the optimistic side. Some include disclaimers that their conclusions rest on unconfirmed market data, estimated costs, etc., provided by the client — a suborned guess, in other words.

Fortunately, Mitchell and others at George Mason have conducted a survey of the economic literature that seriously compares the performance of targeted economic development incentives with the alternative, free-market

incentives. Here is what they found, published in the current issue of “The Review of Regional Studies”:

- While both theoretical and empirical evidence suggest that there is a positive association between economic freedom and prosperity at the state level, the academic literature finds that targeted incentives are less effective in promoting broad-based prosperity.
- Targeted incentives entail an opportunity cost. These incentives direct taxpayer dollars to particular firms and industries which might have been used to provide public goods or to lower tax rates for all.
- While targeted tax cuts and subsidies might spur economic activity among privileged firms, they discourage economic activity elsewhere in the economy by necessitating higher tax rates born by firms and customers in non-privileged sectors.
- When targeted incentives entail outright subsidies, they encourage investments in which marginal costs exceed marginal benefits.
- Subsidies insulate privileged firms from competition, making them less efficient and less accountable to consumer demands. The very possibility of selective privileges encourages firms to inefficiently spend resources seeking privilege from policymakers.
- Targeted policies reward small, highly-organized interest groups with concentrated benefits paid for by taxpayers, consumers and other competitors. Relative to the beneficiaries, the groups that pay for these targeted benefits are unorganized and diffuse, and so tend to find it costlier to resist these policies, even if the total costs exceed the total benefits.
- Because the benefits of targeted incentives are immediate while the costs are often shifted into the future, incentives encourage cost-shifting. The result can be more crony capitalism in the economy.

To summarize, the logical and mechanical flaws of eco-devo are understood to a degree that ignoring them amounts to malfeasance if not fraud. And yet, pick up a newspaper anywhere in

Indiana. It is clear that the policy continues unabated, if you will, with the full support of every governing body in the state.

This, surely, is how society collapses — in a unanimous vote by the local redevelopment commission to the cheers of an unquestioning citizenry.

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Fairness, Properly Understood

(Jan. 16) — The Republicans on my city council are starting to scare me. Accused of prejudice by a new group of Alyinsky Democrats, they folded, at least to the degree they were left mumbling apologies into their shoes.

That, of course, is not unusual. What struck some of us, though, was the absurdity of the Democrat demands, i.e., that the GOP majority give the minority a preference in committee assignments and council offices.

Two of the new Alynskyites happened to have high melanin counts and two x chromosomes and were therefore designated on the spot as historic personages. “I think it’s important to celebrate

this momentous event and what it symbolizes,” pronounced one GOP councilman with a nod to the new members. “I’m honored to be here sitting with you, to be a part of it.”

But the Democrat focus was not on sexual or racial prejudice or even historic firsts. It was on political prejudice — they want more of it. Their argument is that because the recent municipal elections left them without a majority, without the desired authority, it should be granted them as a matter of fairness, or, as they prefer to put it, of “balance.”

The local newspaper, which has been scaring me for some time now, joined in to express its disappointment that this interpretation had not ruled the day. It presented as evidence the not-too-shocking fact that a GOP majority had never selected the two senior Democrats to serve as council president. Nor had the Republicans chosen one of the Democrats to chair the powerful finance committee. Unfair.

Now, fairness is a serious principle for a council to address, but it should be addressed seriously. For that job we recommend Dan Hannan, a political historian who has been speaking and writing on the topic.

Fairness has become an obsession, Hannan says. He notes that a Google graph of the word’s use is flat until 1965, after which it heads for the moon.

The problems is that “fair” these days does not mean “justice” or “equity” or anything specific. Rather, it has become a statement of moral superiority — a superiority, Hannan notes, that paradoxically includes victimhood.

We are reminded that “fairness” has an exact meaning in certain contexts, as in playing a game or when parents set rules for their children. The first meaning in my adult dictionary has it “in accordance with the rules or standards.”

As we get a few years older, the word becomes more of a whine, Hannan notes. When a teenager says something isn’t fair it can mean simply, “You won’t let me do something I want.”

“In recent years something odd has happened,” Hannan concludes. “Adults have started using the

word in much the same way that teenagers do. More than in any previous generation, people today retain their teenage sense of self-centeredness. They use ‘it’s not fair’ as a catch-all complaint, as an assertion of wounded entitlement.”

I once joked that the council needed some adult supervision. I won’t be joking about that anymore.

Mayor Pete at War

(Jan. 10) — Pete Buttigieg, the pluperfect modern avatar-like demographically fashioned hero, is making a credible run for president of the United States partly on his frequent mention of the courage and character needed in a combat zone. There is a strong inference of combat experience.

Fortunately for those interested in the facts, the South Bend mayor’s military service is reviewed in this week’s Wall Street Journal under the headline, “Buttigieg’s War and ‘The Shortest Way Home.’” Let’s just say that record is honorable, even commendable, but unimpressive:

“Mr. Buttigieg spent some five months in Afghanistan, where he writes that he remained less busy than he had been at City Hall, with ‘more time for reflection and reading than I was used to back home.’ He writes that he would take ‘a laptop and a cigar up to the roof at midnight to pick up a Wi-Fi signal and patch via Skype into a staff meeting at home.’ The closest he came to combat was ferrying other staffers around in a SUV: In his campaign kickoff speech last April he referred to ‘119 trips I took outside the wire, driving or guarding a vehicle.’ That’s a strange thing to count. Combat sorties in an F-18 are carefully logged. Driving a car isn’t.”

We are talking about a politician here and not a regular veteran so the phoniness bar is lower. One couldn’t help but wince, though, when Buttigieg turned to an opponent in the October Democratic primary debate and snapped, “I don’t need lessons from you on courage.”

Later he would lecture Sen. Amy Klobuchar on his relationship to the Constitution: “I raised my

right hand and swore to defend (it) with my life. That is my experience, and it may not be the same as yours, but it counts, Senator, it counts.”

More politically than militarily, as it turns out.

The Holcomb Mandate

“(Gov. Eric Holcomb) isn’t too concerned heading into a re-election year, saying that maintaining momentum is just as important as starting it. ‘Here in Indiana, whether it’s bold or not or controversial or shiny, I’m fine not being part of the food fight,’ he said.” — “Holcomb Confident in Bid for Second Term,” Niki Kelly in the Dec. 22 Fort Wayne Journal Gazette.

(Dec. 23) — Angelo Codevilla of the Claremont Institute knows who will win the post-2020 election cycles — those in the “deplorable” places anyway, places such as . . . well, such as Indiana.

These, as you well know, are the places denigrated in urban and governmental circles as populated by dim proles — the common people in the excessively armed hinterland, in flyover country, huddled in villages scratching out a living amid the corn fields. Barack Obama liked to call them “folks” as if he were familiar enough to be condescending.

Codevilla, though, would argue that such people, properly led, will make themselves known at the ballot box both here and nationally.

He predicts that the mega issue that spelled election victory in 2016 will continue to grip the nation beyond 2020, and at all levels. He identifies it on this month’s American Greatness blog:

“From President Obama on down, the political, educational, media and corporate establishment had long since taken for granted that placing the opinions, interests, tastes and the rights of the rest of America on the same plane as their own amounts to ‘false equality.’ They had come to regard us as lower beings. No matter whether they attributed our purported inferiority to our alleged racism, sexism, etc., or just plain stupidity, they negated the possibility of common citizenship with us.”

Codevilla predicts that a new type of leader will come to the fore, more grounded, perhaps less brazen than Donald Trump. He lists what will be their attitudes and priorities:

“Since what the Ruling Class does is driven by its identity, whoever would lead us ‘deplorables’ must leave no doubt that his own (identity), at the very least, is in opposition to theirs. In other words, he has no desire to join the Ruling Class, or to be liked by them, that he understands the harm the Ruling Class has done to America, and that he is on the side of those who wish to save and repair what is possible to save and repair.”

All righty then, what to make of Eric Holcomb? If it is possible to argue that a seemingly kind, adept governor who will be reelected by a large margin is swimming against the tide, here goes . . .

The governor is Gilbert and Sullivan’s “perfect model of a modern major general,” the consummate magistrate, Norman duke, NFL commissioner, university president or whatever, attentive to the concerns of all in the room.

The governor is surrounded as all governors are by apparatchiks, men and women holding the best jobs of their lives and determined to keep them. These and many of the donors, party chairmen and the well-shod department heads in the governmental centers may be embarrassed by Hoosiers generally, or at least to the degree they fit Codevilla’s socio-political description. Indeed, they may see them as a political threat. They may yearn for a better or at least more malleable citizenry.

They aren’t going to get it.

Again, Holcomb will be reelected in 2020 but for reasons detached from his personal attributes or even ideology (if any). His administration has methodically co-opted or compromised all serious opposition (avoided the “food fights”). In addition, thousands of new Republican voters, activated by Donald Trump, will vote a straight ticket this next time (much as a similar political character, the now retired Senate Pro Tem David Long, was reelected in 2016).

There won’t be a Holcomb mandate, only another four years of indoor work for the man from Indianapolis Pike High School. Nor will he have coattails. Nor is he the leader on which to build a broader base. Let’s be frank: The governor does not resonate with an increasingly worried outstate middle class, working men and women of all political disposition.

That may be because Holcomb has never “worked” in the way most Hoosiers think of it. That is not to dismiss six years as a Naval officer or a career as the key staffer for a range of state and federal officeholders. Those jobs required intelligence, judgment, skill and fortitude. But those jobs all had something else in common — an institutional payday. Eric Holcomb’s employers were not going to close shop as a result of market pressure or regulatory whim.

So we are back to it: Does the Holcomb model have promise? Is it, as he says, a simple matter of staying the course, of keeping one’s head down and not stirring up the natives, not frightening the horses?

No, that isn’t a strategy for these times. Indiana voters are waiting for someone who is decidedly — decidedly — in opposition to the almost hereditary Ruling Class in Indianapolis that the Holcomb model represents. Moreover, it will be someone with specific programs to correct the damage.

Voters increasingly will favor elected representatives who make clear they are on the side of those who, in Codevilla’s words, would save and repair what is possible to save and repair.

That won’t be Holcomb or anybody near him. You read it here first.

The Eco-Devo Game

(Dec. 10) — I am suspicious of downtown economic development plans and their related public-private partnerships. That’s not because I know much about economics or even business generally. They simply don’t pass my grandfather test.

That is, my grandfather would be asking a question: If all you have to do to create a wealthy downtown is slap together a package of government grants, loan guarantees and revenue-secured bonds, plus some spare change from a municipal fund or two and an accommodating TIF district, then construct the deal so developers, contractors, professionals and vendors all get paid up front with minimal risk, why isn't every downtown wealthy?

Now I have two expert answers to bolster my grandfatherly suspicions. Richard Maybury of the Henry Madison Research group supplies the first. When such new money is poured into a community, whether the result of local eco-devo machinations or courtesy of the Federal Reserve, a similar thing happens: Unequal fiscal "cones" are created, some large, some smaller and some not at all.

"Areas that receive a lot become hot spots, or cones of dollars," Maybury wrote earlier this month. "Chasing these dollars, businesses, investors and workers abandon what they are doing and move into the cones, becoming dependent on the pours."

But what is poured into these cones, Maybury stresses, is not investment but malinvestment. And a city so tempted is setting itself up for a hard fall come the next recession or depression, a harder fall than competing cities that did things more the old-fashioned way, i.e., attracting risk capital with reduced regulation, increased productivity and profit potential.

"When the pouring slows, the firms and investments go broke, and the workers lose their jobs," Maybury concludes. "Times are tough until the pouring resumes and the cones are revived — or better, but rare, until firms and workers shift to the types, amounts and locations of production that would have existed if the pouring had not distorted the economy."

In my Indiana city, the pouring is unabated. Indeed, plans for subsidized hotels, sports venues, convention centers, recreation or entertainment attractions seem to be announced daily. But how much longer?

This brings us to the second answer to the grandfather's question. It comes in the form of a comprehensive study published earlier this year by Harvard University.

Please know that the appeal of every downtown public-private project is that "if you build it they will come," they being millennial yuppies and DINKS (two incomes, no kids).

But researcher Whitney Airgood-Obrycki warns that they may not. The suburbs continue to outperform urban neighborhoods on multiple economic and demographic variables.

Her study examines in impressive detail the nation's 100 most populous metropolitan areas, classifying census tracts within each area as either urban, inner-ring suburb or outer-ring suburb. It also subdivides suburban communities based on when they were developed.

It then grades each neighborhood on income levels, education, occupations of resident and housing values, and then tracks communities' progress over time. Every Indiana county commissioner should have a copy.

Steve Malanga, writing in this fall's issue of *City Journal*, summarizes the data, and in doing so explains why developers were not lined up earlier to risk their own money on downtown development:

"It seems at odds with the typical media narrative. Gentrification of some city neighborhoods by young hipsters fostered an idea that educated millennials were rejecting their suburban upbringings to reclaim the city. But as they age, millennials are turning out more like their parents than previously thought. As demographer Wendell Cox has shown, even when these young people gravitate toward major metropolitan regions, they've been more likely to live in outlying areas than in central cities. Similarly, anecdotal stories of retirees ditching the 'burbs for city living exaggerate the trend. When considering the fates of cities and suburbs over the last half-century, it's wise to keep in mind the adage that anecdote and data are two different kinds of evidence."

Where will that leave us? If we follow the rent-seekers and public-private “partners” in the distortion of our local economies, we can look forward to: a) a recession more severe in our town than in others; and b) a downtown market exhausting itself.

Well, that’s pretty much where any grandfather would have predicted, and without the paddle.

The Cost of Barratry

(Dec. 7) — The table turned suddenly a decade ago. One day Indiana state government served us, the next day we served it. It happened during a state Senate Appropriations Committee hearing when the chairman took a moment to explain to a young legislator how things were going to work.

The issue was repeal of the onerous and self-defeating inheritance tax. You can’t go around abolishing taxes, the young man learned, without designating how the lost revenue can be replaced.

Lost revenue? Tell us what logic holds that an inheritance tax inefficiently and destructively applied not once but twice and then finally returned to taxpayers would be “lost”? The new logic, that’s what. The committee chairman, as a member of our Ruling Class, was on the cutting edge of it.

Angelo Codevilla of the Claremont Institute has been writing about this recently. “Since 2016, the Ruling Class has left no doubt that it is not merely enacting chosen policies,” says Codevilla. “It is expressing its identity, an identity that has grown and solidified over more than a half century, and that it is not capable of changing.”

Now comes a Twitter message from an old friend, a former legislator whose credentials

include actually keeping a term-limit promise. He links me to an article in “School Matters,” a publication focused on public education in Indiana.

“Tax Caps Cost Schools Hundreds of Millions,” the headline screams.

Cost?

There’s that logic again, that ruling-class identity. This time it is applied to a column of Indiana school districts with the dollar amounts that have been ostensibly ripped from the backpacks of Indiana students.

Without going into the obvious need to redirect resources to classroom teachers and measurable learning, the presumption is that a percentage-based constitutional ceiling on how much of your property can be confiscated somehow costs innocent school children.

To accept that, you have to accept that local officeholders are powerless to readjust priorities or seek election based on a conviction that taxes in other categories could be raised in the interest of public education.

Nor can you suggest there is countervailing waste or inefficiency anywhere else, that there is nothing government does that it doesn’t need to do, that is really none of its business.

That last, I have come to believe, is their point — that we should never fall into a discussion of what government should or should not be doing.

For then we would learn the real cost of this barratry — that is, the loss of public confidence that any official above the township level can be trusted with so much as a coin purse. — *tcl*



"The Battle of Cowpens," painted by William Ranney in 1845, shows an unnamed patriot (far left) saving the life of Col. William Washington.

INDIANAPOLICY *Review*

A journal of classical liberal inquiry observing its 30th year