

INDIANAPOLIS

Review

Fall 2021

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Infrastructure That Works

'Corporations, depreciating capital investments, have a tax incentive to build structures lasting, on average, 40 years. Yet, technological expertise exists to build structures lasting 100 years or, in the case of Roman aqueducts, centuries more.' — Keating, page 7

“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:

- Exalt the truths of the Declaration of Independence, especially as they apply to the interrelated freedoms of religion, property and speech.
- Emphasize the primacy of the individual in addressing public concerns.
- Recognize that equality of opportunity is sacrificed in pursuit of equality of results.

The foundation encourages research and discussion on the widest range of Indiana public policy issues. Although the philosophical and economic prejudices inherent in its mission might prompt disagreement, the foundation strives to avoid political or social bias in its work. Those who believe they detect such bias are asked to provide details of a factual nature so that errors may be corrected.

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Anthony Wayne Ballroom of Fort Wayne's Grand Wayne Center

Wednesday Whist

Convention Centers: An Idea Too Good to Have Been True

"You've all gone completely crazy." — the architect father of Albert Speers on being shown Hitler's plans for a new Berlin

My city has an almost 70-year-old coliseum, the old-fashioned kind built simply to serve the sports and entertainment needs of the community. It continues to do that impressively well, paying its own bills and undergoing regular renovation and expansion.

Some years ago, the local powers, encouraged by bonding attorneys, architectural firms, contractors and consultants, decided we needed something better, something more grand, something that would serve not just the locals but attract people from throughout the state, throughout the nation even, perhaps the world.

Tax-backed financial incentives made it happen. The way it worked was local officials used low-cost municipal bonds because private industry was wary of investing in such a mega

project. The cities then promised bond-buyers that taxes on hotel rooms and other spending by visitors would pay off the debt.

In 1985, we broke ground on a 225,000-square-foot facility aptly named the Grand Wayne Center. Its sales manager, a Missy Eppley, will tell you it is "the Midwest's premier event destination" ideally located within one day's drive of "half the U.S. population" — all in the heart of our downtown.

We visited the center and the downtown recently. We were impressed by the amount of concrete and rebar. Architects, many of them large contributors to recent mayoral campaigns, plainly have been busy. There were several tower cranes downtown testifying to some sort of construction boom. We did not see, however, a lot of people, and we saw none we could identify as out-of-towners with pockets full of cash.

That is not to say that conventions are not being booked. At what profit, though, is difficult to determine. Even more difficult is whether the center and its downtown focus has enriched the community at large — at least compared with what might have been the case had private investment been the motivating force.

So we began asking the classic journalistic questions: Compared with what, at what cost or gain, and on what hard evidence?

It turned out that a fog surrounds much of downtown renewal. The fine print in the rental agreement for the new baseball stadium across the street, for instance, is rarely discussed. The new downtown restaurants seem a bit light on diners. There are nasty rumors about the vacancy rates in office space. Much of downtown property is off the tax rolls, partly a result of the City Council's attempts to incentivize development there.

Several years ago, the Indiana Policy Review commissioned a survey by a certified public accountant to determine whether the convention center was making money as it claimed. He was given a set of books but they did not include critical financing costs. His attempts to gather year-over-year numbers also were discouraged. Any independent cost-benefit analysis was impossible.

See Keating on Page 7

We were left with the suspicion that the Grand Wayne and its attendant downtown hotels, parking garages and restaurants were not delivering as promised, and perhaps the new downtown itself was more a Potemkin Village than a dynamic public-private partnership.

Now comes reports that the pandemic has exposed a core weakness in the downtown economic-development strategy. That is, if one city can use tax-backed bonding to build that from which private investment shies, then other cities can do the same. The result can be a market glut, a situation that private investors try mightily to avoid.

From the mid-1980s through 2010, cities added 30 million square feet of convention space,

If one city can use tax-backed bonding to build that from which private investment shies, then other cities can do the same. The result can be a market glut, a situation that private investors try mightily to avoid.

an increase of 75 percent, according to Steven Malanga of City Magazine: "The only problem: the growth of the convention business didn't keep pace. In fact, it declined. From 2000 through 2010, the number of attendees at conventions fell by

nearly a third, from 126 million to 86 million."

Malanga quotes the ex-mayor of Seattle as saying that convention centers are now "a stagnant and dying industry that require endless taxes."

If that is the case in my city, mum's the word. The boosterish local newspaper, which has benefited from the spike in downtown property values, is zipped up tight.

And finally there is human nature. It was fun to sit down with architects and contractors planning grand edifices using other people's money. It was more fun to attend ribbon-cuttings, throw out opening-day pitches and expand on how this or that project fits into a greater civic vision. We all enjoyed that, politicians particularly.

But we are not so good at ensuring that these projects are operated efficiently or were even justified initially. That takes real expertise. We are particularly bad at explaining what happens when the numbers head south.

In the case of convention centers, the authorities who dreamed them up and pushed them through the city councils and oversight committees are long gone or are in tall grass. If the centers fail, we will be left to blame ourselves for trusting fools with such foolhardy projects.

"It is hard to imagine a more stupid or more dangerous way of making decisions than by putting those decisions in the hands of people who pay no price for being wrong," famously wrote the economist Thomas Sowell.

That would make a grand city motto. — *tcl*

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Twickenham Bridge in South Bend

Forming an Opinion on Infrastructure Economics

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What Works

Infrastructure is complicated; there are no easy answers. Yet, crumbling bridges, unsafe water, inadequate airports, antiquated ports and weak cyber insecurity threaten our nation's health, safety and economic future.

Confusion reigns as the U.S. Congress debates a \$3.5 trillion dollar spending package in addition to another trillion or so associated with a bipartisan infrastructure bill. Lack of expertise in infrastructure engineering inhibits most Americans from commenting.

However, there is no genius available to solve this dilemma, and it is foolish for every suggestions to carry equal weight. To address U.S. infrastructure successfully, residents need to formulate informed opinions.

The Uniqueness of Infrastructure

The last duty of government according to Adam Smith, writing in 1776, is to erect and maintain public institutions and public works. Smith argued that public works create benefits to society as a whole, but a private individual or group cannot generally be expected to erect or maintain them. Presently, however, large corporations can raise amounts of capital exceeding some nations' gross national product. The case for government provision is based on the degree to which infrastructure holds characteristics associated with public goods.

In comparison with national defense and the rule of law, infrastructure shares some but not all characteristics of a public good. Public goods are defined in terms of two characteristics, non-exclusivity and non-rivalry. It is relatively easy to exclude others from consuming your private goods, but not the street in front of your home. Public lighthouses were an example of non-rivalry; the per-unit amount of benefits provided did not decline with one more ship guided by the light.

Roads, airports and flood control projects share, to some degree, the nature of a public good, limited ability to exclude and over-use of existing infrastructures. The key is whether there exists a cost-effective way to exclude individuals once the public good is provided and how to deal with congestion.

Infrastructure offers individuals and firms access to transportation, communication, commercial and social activity, potable water, safety from environmental extremes and energy. There is no clear theoretical distinction between infrastructure falling within government provision and that of the private market economy. In practice, however, the government's role is justified politically by historical precedent, macroeconomic and social concerns, plus geo-strategic positioning.

Avoiding transfers of benefits and costs is impossible, whenever infrastructure is publicly available. Those, who never visit a National Park,

may receive intangible benefits in knowing that these parks merely exist. For others, pride in maintaining natural resources is important. Residents of Ft. Wayne, Indiana recently celebrated Mama Jo, a tunnel-boring machine that dug through 5 miles of bedrock. The 14-year construction endeavor will handle 850 million gallons of combined sewage every day. This should result in public benefits such as cleaner rivers and as well as private benefits to a subset of 45,000 residents experiencing basement backups and street flooding.

Infrastructure policy requires a framework for defining public as compared to private goods, a critical distinction lacking in the proposed bills. Also lacking is a discussion of net benefits spread over time, a fundamental characteristic of infrastructure.

It Is not About Jobs

Most goods have collective and private attributes, but government transfer payments are largely private; the benefits are divisible. Any spillovers, affecting GDP or furthering a social agenda, may justify government subsidies. It is a mistake, however, to refer to all government spending as an investment. There is widespread support for government spending on social services, but expected rates of returns over time are often not based on capital budgeting. People remain free, and there are no direct consequences, if the purported intention of the transfer is unrealized.

While government spending on “human capital” includes some spending on equipment and salaries, the intention is to assist individuals in need of the services. Attempts to justify government expenditures on “human capital investment” are sometimes quantified in terms of potential taxes paid by recipients. Infrastructure spending differs from transfers to individuals because it is used to purchase capital which is actually owned by government or private entities.

Some infrastructure-like projects, such as parking garages, convention centers and stadiums are quite visible and touted as legacies. Little

attention is given to the opportunity costs of having built them, ongoing expenses required to maintain them and potential streams of revenue from user fees. True infrastructure proposals employ return on investment calculations, specify a finite budget and consider the opportunity cost of foregone projects. The characteristic high start-up costs of infrastructure do not necessarily institutionalize long-term salary and maintenance commitments.

There is a problem with using a dual criterion in assessing the value of government programs. Parallel or secondary goals, like full employment, are irrelevant to determining if infrastructure is needed, good and safe. Coders on tedious assignments, welders on high bridges and bulldozer operators on dangerous highways have other options. It is demeaning to insist that government is doing infrastructure workers a service in creating jobs for them; their willingness to perform challenging work at market wages is relevant.

Targeting infrastructure towards low-income communities is also a misguided objective. Certainly, Infrastructure construction in the past divided, dislocated and gentrified neighborhoods. It is not clear, however, that low-income communities were the only ones negatively affected. Good infrastructure, by its nature, yields disparate impacts. However, targeting infrastructure initiatives to predominately low - income communities often results in creating amenities for tourists and the affluent. The intention should not be to exclude but rather provide access, if possible, for all residents, not to increase local property and hospitality taxes. Infrastructure benefits accrue more to some than others, but the primary goal is to increase access for all users who take pride in beautiful well-built structures and retain hope in their community’s long-term prospects.

Compliance with secondary objectives creates costly delays and discourages potential firms from bidding. For example, an ordinance to increase city contracting with minority- and women-owned firms in South Bend, Indiana delayed asphalt

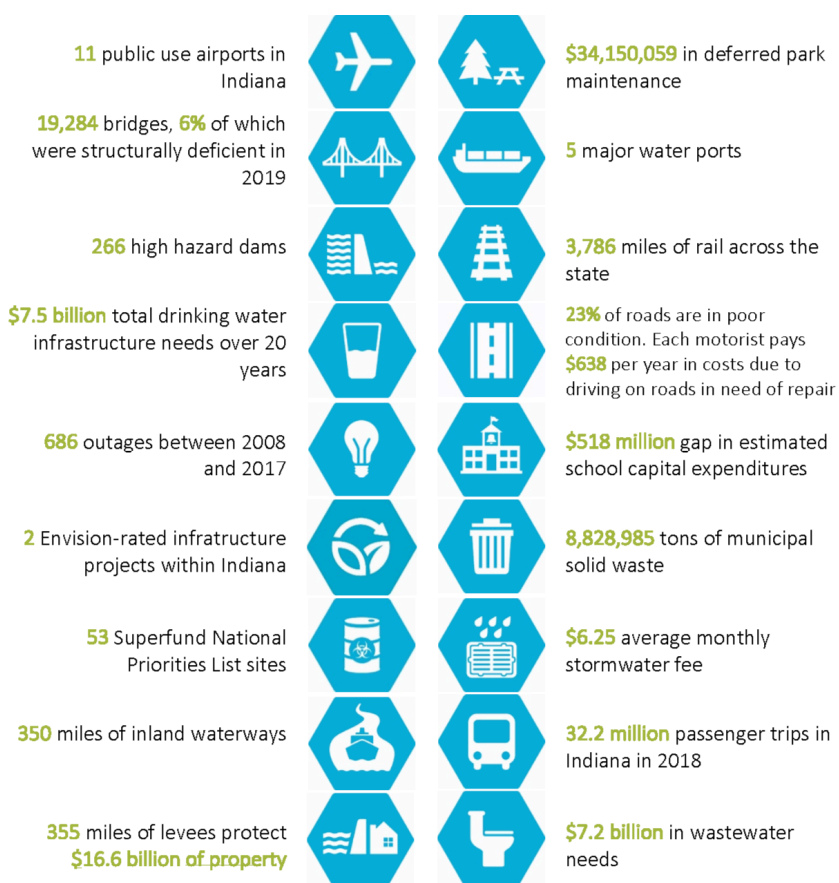
crack-sealing, micro-surfacing and intersection improvements for over a year. Bidding companies failed to convince the Bureau of Public Works of their “good faith effort” to subdivide work into smaller chunks and offer them to minority- and women-owned firms. A city consultant, paid \$250,000, had overcounted by 50 percent the potential number of minority and women-owned firms. According to the mayor’s diversity and inclusion office director, delays will allow officials to work with “. . . our contractors and educating them better around the implementation of the program plan.” (“Some City Work Delayed,” South Bend Tribune, May 26, 2021, A1) So much for encouraging new contractors, regardless of ownership, to bid based on quality and cost.

Is U.S. Infrastructure Really in Crisis?

The shutdown of the 5500 mile Colonial Pipeline suggests that cyber vulnerabilities in energy and other U.S. systems are serious. In ransomware attacks, criminal use computer code to seize control of information systems. To unlock these systems, firms must pay extortion fees; otherwise, these criminals threaten to release firm-sensitive operating information to the web. Cyber vulnerability has increased as computer systems have become more connected. Remote control apparatus create entry points to nationwide grids. Firewalls and other protective techniques need to be established and maintained.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) report, more than 850 water mains break every day, an increase of 27 percent since 2014. Moreover, some 44 percent of America’s major roads are in poor or mediocre

Figure 1: Key Facts about Indiana’s Infrastructure



Source: “Infrastructure Report Card,” American Society of Civil Engineers, 2021.

condition, and 38 percent of the nation’s bridges need repair, replacement or significant rehabilitation. Amtrak passenger lines, in line to receive additional federal funding, operate on congested freight lines. Inadequate infrastructure hinders our capacity to deal with natural disasters such as flooding, hurricanes, drought and wildfires.

In 1930, the U.S. allocated 4.2 percent of GDP to public and private infrastructure-type projects; by 2016, similar investment dwindled to 2.5 percent. Public spending on roads, bridges, water systems and other infrastructure items fell by 8 percent between 2003 and 2017.

According to the Container Port Performance Index released in 2021 by the World Bank and

IHS Markit, not one U.S. container port is included among the world's top 50. U.S. ports overall are increasingly incapable of dealing with weather disruptions and increased demand. Global supply chains are hindered when, for example, the Los Angeles-Long Beach container port complex anchors up to 40 container ships with nowhere to go (Peter Tirschwell, "Behind Your Long Wait for Packages," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2021, A15).

Core infrastructural needs, such as airports, highways and rail transport, bridges, transport hubs, network communications, media, the electricity grid, dams, power plants, seaports, oil refineries and water systems cannot be taken for granted. We recognize that politicians must hold competing interests at bay, and perhaps most of the American public is not on board with infrastructure as a priority. What is certain, however, is that the state of U.S. infrastructure is falling behind that observed globally for countries with similar levels of per capita income.

Assessing Local Needs

Media focus during 2021 has concentrated on Congressional and Executive efforts to develop and pass an infrastructure bill. Rubber meets the road, pun intended, when infrastructure goals and federal funds allocated trickle down to states and localities. In a 2010 interview with the *New York Times*, President Barack Obama warned, "There's no such thing as shovel-ready projects." Part of the problem is that congressional priorities differ from local needs.

Unfortunately, states and localities have not maintained an inventory of existing inventory or prioritized future needs. One exception is former Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, who in 2016 did create an Infrastructure Commission to come up with a plan to address everything within his state's infrastructure – from broadband to water lines – over the next 30 to 50 years.

Indiana's next two-year budget reflects state infrastructure needs and the General Assembly's priorities. It includes:

- \$250 million to expand broadband access;

- \$100 million for local water infrastructure grants;
- \$60 million for local transportation grants; and
- \$60 million to improve and expand Indiana's trails.

In addition, Indiana will use \$231 million in held taxpayer funds to buy down the state's commitment to Northwest Indiana rail projects and \$205 million to cash fund Highway I-69.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) provides a listing by state of infrastructure needs, in which Indiana earns the same grade as the U.S. as a whole. Figure 1 indicates ASCE's assessment of Indiana's infrastructure stock, usage and problem areas. Occupational bias aside, the ASCE's contribution identifies local needs and, in addition, assigns scores to each state by infrastructure type. For example, Indiana scores higher than neighboring states on guarding against emergency dam failure. However, Indiana earned lower grades than Ohio and Michigan for rail transportation and Kentucky for Hazardous Waste infrastructure. Lower scores do not necessarily represent infrastructure neglect but rather unique local needs.

Governance

Assigning Responsibility and Quasi-Ownership

A report by the Economic Policy Institute proposes a stronger role in infrastructure for federal versus state and local government. Hunter Blair, author of the report, argues that the federal government can run deficits during economic downturns and deal more effectively with regional networks, economics of scale and infrastructure externalities. Because dominant firms can maintain their monopolistic position, he cautions against relying on the private sector especially if initial high fixed costs are government subsidized ("What is the Ideal Mix of Federal, State and Local Government Investment in Infrastructure?" Economic Policy Institute, September 11, 2017 <https://www.epi.org>, accessed July 10, 2021).

Recommendations for consistent infrastructure supply and quality are important. However, Blair's suggestions somewhat contradict his central argument for an increased federal role. State and local governments can cooperate and historically have assumed responsibility for most infrastructure spending. Furthermore, the federal government does not appear to have had any comparative advantage in operations and maintenance.

State and local level officials, however, are rightly criticized for inertia in undertaking construction and maintenance initiatives while receiving considerable federal funding. Decent roads, transportation hubs, sewage systems, cyber-networks and clean drinking water start with good governance on all levels.

Ownership and Responsibility

Table 1 shows that state and local government dominate in the U.S. with respect to actually owning most infrastructural assets.

Ownership implies responsibility. However, it is believed that state and local governments often lack the taxing power to provide and maintain infrastructure. The concept of fiscal federalism suggests that the federal government is better able to collect tax revenue and reallocate funds to local government. In practice, however, federal infrastructure involvement often incentivizes local officials to postpone and avoid fiscal responsibility.

Disruptions in trash collecting and snow plowing carry immediate political consequences. Otherwise, officials ignore core infrastructure until a major catastrophe occurs. Estimating infrastructure risk is difficult but not an excuse for avoidance. Ideally, the public would acknowledge political risks and hold themselves equally accountable for neglect and misguided initiatives. There is plenty of blame to share: unused tennis and beach volleyball courts, local museums and marinas attracting few tourists, empty classrooms, obsolete information systems, etc. The question to be addressed is, 'How do we limit

the number of failed projects going forward and reduce the risk of infrastructure failure?'

Confined to favorite projects, determined through lobbying and tradeoffs between politicians, federal allocations are one or two levels removed from local needs. Accountability requires ownership of each infrastructure project. Corruption and waste result when federal funding is combined with weak local oversight; accountability requires that a local agency be defined as ultimately responsible and given "quasi-ownership" for each project. Volunteer appointees to public housing and health service have not been sufficiently involved to monitor operations or be responsible for multiple sources of revenue.

Local officials can access federal funding for merely administering some federal grants, up to \$800,000 on an 8 million dollar grant. Using administrative fees to contract with outside consultants for feasibility studies is not the same as assuming direct responsibility. Incentives to fully execute federal proposals are lacking.

Downstream, the ballot offers some degree of responsibility, but turn over or lack thereof does not encourage officials to determine best practices for minimizing the failure of projects going forward.

The following is a summary of The American Association of Civil Engineers' recommendations for federally funded projects:

1. Require all projects greater than \$5 million to use life cycle cost analysis and develop plans for full funding, including maintenance and operation, until the end of its service life.
2. Create incentives for state and local governments and the private sector to invest in maintenance.
3. In order to leverage funding, use managerial tools to prioritize projects most in need of investment and maintenance.
4. Streamline the project permitting process across infrastructure sectors. Include safeguards to protect the natural environment,

to clarify regulatory requirements and to insure a timeline to completion.

5. Identify a pipeline of infrastructure projects attractive to private sector investment.

Avoiding Corruption

Virginia and other states have initiated a portfolio-based process to score transportation infrastructure projects. This replaces politically driven wish lists with an objective, data-driven and transparent decision process.

With a portfolio in place, each infrastructure project becomes a separate case with an identifiable agency “owning” it. This agency then prepares an analysis defining goals, costs, benefits and impacts, in consultation with an independent decision-making body capable of distinguishing between inherently governmental and commercial activities. Final evaluation requires an open process, including the media, taxpayer advocates,

potential private-sector partners and other stakeholders (Gilroy and Moore, *Ten Principles of Privatization*, The Heartland Institute, Chicago, IL, 2010).

Clearing a path for project delivery requires state and local government expertise in breaking down each project into components requiring distinct expertise. Capable local government employees must be facile in using tools available for planning and managing capital projects and implementing alternative procurement practices; they must as be familiar as well with best global practices in negotiating unforeseen delays requiring contract renegotiation.

Public officials do not always act in the public interest. The American Society of Civil Engineers in 2004 claimed that corruption accounts for an estimated \$340 billion of worldwide construction costs each year, around 10 percent of the global construction industry value-added of \$3.2 trillion.

Table 1: Basic U.S. Infrastructure Stock by Ownership Shares in 2017

Type of Infrastructure	Federal government (percent)	State and local government (percent)	Private (percent)
Water	0.0	90.8	9.2
Sewer	0.0	93.4	6.6
Conservation and Development	61.9	30.7	7.4
Power	.6	11.9	87.5
Electric	.8	13.9	85.3
Petroleum/Natural Gas	0.0	3.3	96.7
Transportation	1.4	88.8	9.8
Highways and Streets	1.1	98.9	0.0
Air Transportation	0.0	88.1	11.9
Rail Transportation	0.0	0.0	100.0
Transit	0.0	97.2	2.8
Water	0.0	93.6	6.4
Digital Systems	0.0	0.0	100.0

Source Base: Jennifer Bennet et al., “Appendix: Table 3. Private and Public Ownership Shares of Nominal Net Stocks,” *Measuring Infrastructure*, Bureau of Economic Analysis, December 2020.

Economists analyzed corruption involving one company, Odebrecht, offering bribes in ten Latin American and two African countries. The Odebrecht case implicated almost one-third of Brazil's senators and almost half of all governors. The U.S Department of Justice maintained jurisdiction because of payments drawn on New York banks. This was the largest case prosecuted in the 40-year history of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, both in terms of the profits and fines associated with corruption (Nicolas Campos, Eduardo Engel, Ronald Fischer and Alexander Galetovic, "The Ways of Corruption in Infrastructure: Lessons from the Odebrecht Case," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 35, No. 2, Spring 2021, 171-190).

Surprisingly, the economists determined that auctions of large infrastructure projects tended to be competitive at the bidding stage. How, then, did Odebrecht distort the selection process? First, the weighted average of objective and subjective scores gave an advantage to Odebrecht. Secondly, technical requirements were set to disqualify other potential bidders.

Profit margins, as well as bribes, in the Odebrecht case were small relative to the size of the project. Due to competition and transparency at the tendering stage, public officials had limited discretion and this reduced the benefits of bribing. Smaller bribes to a larger number of officials suggest that the value of buying access was minimal. Having a single agency in charge does not necessarily reduce corruption, but definitely increases the probability of detection.

Fortunately, improved disclosure and transparency for firms operating in international bond markets limit contractors' means of generating funds to pay bribes. With less need to court the favor of politicians, participation in procurement auctions increases. With less reliance on subjective criteria, firms offer better-designed tenders.

Details on contract renegotiations are seldom available, even in developed countries. Renegotiation reviews tendered in open auctions could perhaps exclude the firm holding the initial

contract. The goals of government agencies and profit-seeking partners and contractors are different, and that is expected. Business officials sometimes stress that they work hard to avoid the mud pits of corruption by keeping their distance from politics. They realize, however, that there is an inevitable price to pay when the newly elected perceive their lukewarm support. On a positive note, a private contractor's long-term survival is often associated with a reputation unstained by corruption.

Local Government Discretion

There are three types of federal grants each with a different set of administrative conditions and accountability. Formula categorical grants, like those extending unemployment compensation, precisely target recipients. Individual recipients have broad discretion in the use of funds and relatively few administrative conditions are attached other than standard government accounting procedures.

The federal government also awards categorical grants for narrowly specified projects, such as subsidized housing. States, local governments, corporations and nonprofits compete for these based on specified eligibility criteria.

The third type of federal allocations are block grants for a specified range of activities. Federal administrative and reporting criteria are attached, but local officials have more discretion on how these funds are allocated (Federal Grants to State and Local Governments: A Historical Perspective on Contemporary Issues, Congressional Research Service, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>, R40638, updated May 22, 2019).

Grants are a means of imposing federal control over state and local government. The No Child Left Behind Act and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act are just two examples. However, grants can be designed as cooperative versus coercive federalism.

A portion of the March 2021 \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act gave local officials some flexibility and discretion. Expected to

compensate for decreased tax revenue, allocations included water, sewer and broadband infrastructure. However, local officials could distribute funds to nonprofits or public benefit corporations as part of the Act's broader intentions.

With a post-pandemic rebound in local tax collections, "rescue" grants were redefined as "stimulus" plans. City officials, attending the U.S. Conference of Mayors' recent meeting, spoke of building community centers and offering incentives to lure businesses into low-income neighborhoods that need them. For decades, federally backed empowerment zones have rarely accomplished the goal of improving neighborhoods needing access to critical infrastructure. Spreading federal government largesse around is easier than tackling the reforms required for a functioning environment.

Private Firms Have a Role

Despite the monopoly-like characteristics of infrastructure, there are significant benefits to private-sector involvement in designing, building, financing, operating and maintaining infrastructure for public use.

In 1913, foreseeing the automobile's impact on American life, Carl Fisher, in part responsible for establishing the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, conceived and was instrumental in the development and construction of the Lincoln Highway, the first road across America. The Lincoln Highway was initially financed with contributions from automobile manufacturers and suppliers. U.S. subways, railroads, ports and broadband share a similar history. They were initiated, financed and constructed by private industry.

Has bureaucratic red tape and regulations stifled private infrastructure initiatives? Alternatively, have tax rebates and other business incentives lured firms into rent seeking, reaping profits at taxpayer expense? Corporate welfare has

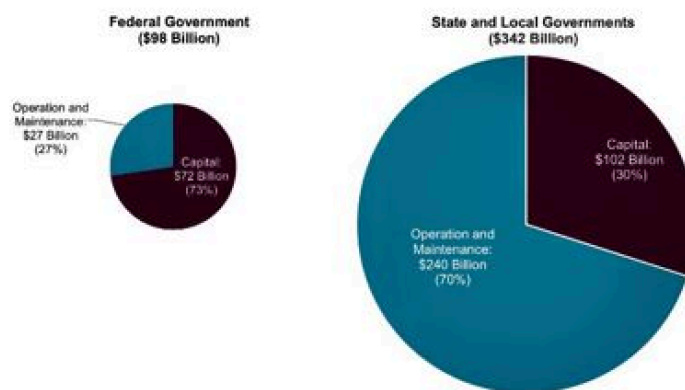
played a role in reducing private initiatives at great loss to infrastructure quality.

Private investment is generally more productive than public (government) investment because it can respond more quickly to demand and scarcities. It rewards good decisions with profits and disciplines bad decisions with losses. In contrast, decisions about roads, bridges and other infrastructure projects, eligible for government funding, are channeled through partisan politics.

If private versus public investment yields higher return, overall government spending on infrastructure could actually decline by increasing the private share of investment spending. The goal is to figure out the best means of achieving infrastructure improvements.

Certainly, crony capitalism and government-directed insider capitalism eliminate the advantage of private delivery. It is also important to realize that private interests will interpret regulations to their advantage. For example, corporations, depreciating capital investments, have a tax incentive to build structures lasting, on average, 40 years. Yet, technological expertise exists to build structures lasting 100 years or, in the case of Roman aqueducts, centuries more.

Figure 2: Contrasting Federal versus States Capital Spending and Maintenance of Infrastructure



Source: Congressional Budget Office, using data from the Office of Management and Budget and the Census Bureau.

The correction for infrastructure monopoly, in both the public and private sectors, is competition. It is naïve to think that government, given bureaucratic incompetence, has no role in infrastructure development. Naïve, as well, is the belief that government provision substitutes for corporate greed. Overcoming the lack of popular will in addressing infrastructure requires a realistic understanding of both sectors. Civil servants can work with civil engineers and private firms to build infrastructure that is durable and safe. This requires, of course, that the dominant selection criterion for awarding infrastructure contracts be the proven ability to get the job done.

What is the ideal mix of the federal, state, local government and private sectors in providing infrastructure? This issue will never be fully resolved. However, for those comfortable with the tension between public and private, federal and local, there is hope for a consensus on constructing new and maintaining existing infrastructure given an informed public and democratic accountability.

Financing

Local Infrastructure Spending Dominates Federal Spending

One would think listening to the news, that the federal government was the primary spender on infrastructure. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The federal versus state and local share of public spending for two major infrastructure types, transportation and water, is presented in Figure 2. State and local governments dominate in terms of both capital and maintenance. In 2017, state and local spending accounted for 89.9 percent of total public spending on infrastructure maintenance and 59 percent on capital. Admittedly, some of state and local spending includes federal allocations.

Some economists argue that, given the natural monopoly characteristics of infrastructure, state and local governments lack expertise in contracting with corporations. Therefore, they

recommend that a national infrastructure bank would be better able to direct spending (Hunter Blair, Economic Policy Institute). One must question a lack of local expertise when good universities, recognized globally for technical and engineering expertise, are located in cities and states across the country.

Leaving the availability of expertise aside, infrastructure ownership, spending and management presently reside on the local level. Not every infrastructure challenge demands a centralized political solution. Regional governments are actually in a better position to consider financing alternatives while holding tax rates on wage income constant.

The trillion or so dollar size of Congress's infrastructure bill is almost beyond comprehension. Although its infrastructure allocations are dispersed over several years and may include unspent pandemic relief monies, the bill will contribute to annual budgetary deficits. If this and the additionally proposed \$2.5 trillion bill were to pass, the national debt will increase. The unprecedented size of the national debt is a legitimate concern for those trying to have an informed opinion on infrastructure.

From 1970 onward, the federal government shifted to a budget-deficit policy. In 2019, GDP growth called for a budget surplus, but the federal government borrowed an amount equal to 22 percent of its total expenditures. This debt did not foster investment in infrastructure but instead focused on mass consumption. Personal benefit expenditures, however much needed, will not generate the economic growth required to pay down the debt incurred. Easy access to federal debt absolves residents from realizing how connected all households are, regardless of income, and absolves politicians from accountability in making the tradeoffs required to maintain the required infrastructural base (Christopher DeMuth, "America's Welfare State Is on Borrowed Time," *The Wall Street Journal*, Thursday, May 6, 2021, A21).

The discretionary federal budget, excluding Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, for 2021

is \$1,485 billion. Over \$700 billion goes toward military spending, including Homeland Security, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other defense-related departments. The residual pays for all other federal programs; the largest components going to the departments of Health and Human Services, Education and Housing and Urban Development. A serious political risk to a bipartisan compromised infrastructure bill is the extent to which it would pave the way to a phase two bill expanding government to a larger share of GDP permanently.

Our assumption is that U.S. residents, trying to hold an informed opinion, would appreciate a bipartisan reasonably sized and focused infrastructure package with modest tax funding. In place of infrastructure grants, the federal government could provide credit assistance in the form of direct loans, loan guarantees and standby lines of credit. Eligibility would have to depend on an agency's actual loan experience.

For example, the Transportation and Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Acts authorized such loans for both government and private entities. It might be the time to support these loans with higher authorization levels.

Direct and Indirect User Fees

Whenever possible, the expense of public works should not come from public revenue, according to Adam Smith, but passed on to users.

In 1811, construction began on the National Road, connecting the Potomac and Ohio Rivers. It was one of the first public works projects of the federal government. By 1835, the federal government had turned parts over to the states. To maintain its portion of the National Road, Pennsylvania instituted tolls, and continued collecting them until the 1870s.

Direct and indirect user fees are good options for financing new or existing infrastructure, even when they fail to cover all costs. As a price mechanism, they are a useful price mechanism in allocating scarce resources such that neither too much or too little is provided.

Original limited access Interstates are wearing out, and alternative sources of revenue are needed to addresses reconstruction. To approach economic efficiency, those that benefit should bear the cost and technology makes it easier to exclude. Admittedly, toll-financed reconstruction is politically unpopular with those living and commuting near a selected interstate. If alternative routes are available, locals might actually have the most to gain.

The federal government initially funded 90 percent of interstate expenses by assessing a federal tax on gasoline. Direct user fees were never seriously considered because a low cost technology for collecting tolls did not exist at that time. Thus, public opinion has continued to view interstates as a "free" public good.

A simple financing rule for infrastructure is to ensure that revenue collected from direct charges or indirect user fees is sufficient for maintenance and to finance debt issued at the time of construction. Any surplus revenue could be plowed back into expansion. The practical difficulty is determining if direct and indirect user fees are sufficiently high (low) to eliminate excess demand (supply) for any particular type of infrastructure. Entrance fees at Indiana's state parks function as a price mechanism to partially cover costs and optimize use of a scarce resource.

Identifying alternative revenue streams to finance infrastructure is essential. Congress has loosened the use of tolls on sections of the Interstate, but Congress has not yet authorized states to finance modernization with direct charges.

The Bipartisan Policy Center develops and advocates for consensus-driven, cost-effective and bipartisan policies (Nellenbach and Winkler, "Letter to Hill Leadership," February 3, 2021. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org>). To boost infrastructure funding, the Center offers two suggestions:

- Reauthorize federal surface transportation programs. To offset current expenditures, Congress should increase gas taxes by at least 15 cents per gallon and index these taxes to inflation.

- Prepare for the transition to a vehicle miles traveled fee. With rising ownership of electric and more fuel-efficient vehicles, transitioning from gas taxes to a user charge based on miles traveled for all vehicles will be fundamental to sustaining the user-pay, user-benefit principle embedded in current transportation funding.

In South Bend, Indiana, upgrading the City's water and sewer infrastructure through a rate hike is meeting resistance. Council members are committed to a \$130 million investment but counting on federal rescue funds and general city revenue to cover costs. Increasing rates are not popular with households paying the Customer Assistance Program monthly charge to subsidize discounts for low-income households. The reality, however, is that per unit fees are the best means for resource conservation, for a personal assessment of affordability and for financing water and sewage.

A rudimentary examination of the state of U.S. infrastructure suggests that a general increase in direct and indirect user fees is preferable to tax hikes on wage income that unnecessarily reduce labor force participation.

Private Firms Assuming Operational and Financial Risk

Good infrastructure trumps any ideological preference for exclusive public or private provision.

Thus private capital is available and plays a major part in infrastructure renewal in countries around the world. Private investment consists of direct capital and indirect portfolio investment. With direct private capital investment, state ownership may be retained but the structure or system is leased to private entities. With indirect private infrastructure investment, municipal bonds are sold through financial markets. Lodges in National Parks, built and managed by a private firm, are one example of direct private infrastructure investment. An insurance company buying a municipal bond is an example of indirect private financing.

Private direct investors are willing to bet big on infrastructure. Australian pension fund managers and a New York-based firm submitted a nearly \$17 billion takeover bid for Sydney Airport. Sydney Airport is one of the few publicly traded large airports; other private firms manage airports in Paris, Frankfurt and parts of Mexico.

There are two main reasons why private direct investment plays only a minor role in the U.S. Government entities, in general, own and self-manage most infrastructure. The second is that private funds require a higher return and government entities can borrow at lower rates of interest.

What measures could facilitate greater private investment? Congress could authorize an increase in tax-exempt private-activity bonds. The present cap has been reached, and the law authorizing such bonds refers exclusively to new public projects, not existing infrastructure.

The range of interest rates in private capital markets could discipline state and local officials seeking private funding to rank projects from those with the greatest expected benefits to those with the least.

The structure of a contract leasing public infrastructure to private management could guarantee quality, on-time service and lower costs. This assumes, of course, that consumer preferences are revealed through their willingness to pay user fees and, wherever possible, are given alternatives.

Vigilant oversight is required such that profit-seeking firms do not offset their risks to taxpayers. Guaranteeing rates of return to a negligent private utility or lessee justifies public cynicism. Nevertheless, in moving forward, new options are required and private direct capital investments are available given an identifiable robust stream of revenue and a conducive environment.

Infrastructure Bonds Issued by Government

States generally are required to balance their budgets. However, states and localities are aware of the long-term benefits of infrastructure spending and some maintain separate operating and capital accounts. This allows states and

localities to borrow money by issuing bonds, often referred to as munis. In this way, localities can amortize large upfront infrastructure costs. Taxpayer revenue backs general obligation bonds; however, streams of revenue from user fees are required to pay interest on other municipal bonds.

Before the Great Recession of 2008, municipal bonds, given their federal income tax advantage, paid lower rates of interest than Treasuries. Recently, the Treasury can borrow at lower rates. Caged bondholders realize that not all municipalities have the tax base or revenue streams required to meet future bond payments.

Institutional investors dominate as holders of infrastructure debt. The terms to maturity of municipal bonds are a good match for the long-term liabilities of insurance companies and public pension funds. The interstate highway system would be an ideal project for U.S. and Canadian pension funds already investing in projects around the world (Robert Poole, “Build Infrastructure with Private Cash,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 31, 2021).

Certain types of infrastructure certainly warrant government sponsorship. For example, a natural resource may be what economists’ refer to as a “commons”. Congestion, pollution and network effects, arising out of common use, prevent market mechanisms from producing optimal allocations. In these cases, centralized ownership and centralized decision-making are recommended. The goal then is to create the circumstances in which providers, either public or private, offer high quality and optimal quantities of access at the least cost.

There is no need to advantage any particular sector, including government, in delivering essential public services, and not all infrastructure needs to be financed out of general tax revenue.

The Private Partnership Option

Public-Private partnerships (PPPs) centralize decision-making into a hybrid type of firm, consisting of a government entity and a profit-seeking or non-profit organization. Australia has

used PPPs for decades. Issues with PPPs concern risk-sharing between the public and private entities, rights to net revenue and the public interest (Keating and Keating. “Private Firms, Public Entities and Microeconomic Incentives: Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Australia and the United States,” *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2013 pp. 176-197).

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are a case study for a potentially lethal mix of private profit and public risk. Here, private investor risk was passively regulated by the government and covered with taxpayer guarantees. Other examples explain the public’s negative perception of PPPs. For example, profit-seeking private professional sports franchises earn much of their income on TV contracts and season tickets. Yet, they play local games in newly built stadiums yielding low revenue exempted from property taxes. This leaves local communities with responsibility for outstanding debt on already demolished stadiums and museums.

In Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), the private partner pays some of the upfront costs of an infrastructure project in return for a stream of revenue from either user fees or tax revenue. Following construction, they provide services according to the contract. The partnership has partial ownership rights to the structure for the term of the contract. Typically, the asset reverts to the state at the end of the agreement. The revenue stream repays debt, funds operations and maintenance, delivers contracted services and provides a return to investors.

In the case of PPPs operating toll roads, utilities, ports and similar infrastructure, the government does not guarantee revenue, although it effectively underwrites an agreed real rate of return on investment with lengthy terms, toll escalation arrangements and provisions to minimize competitive public transport options. The contract ensures that user fees cover most financing, maintenance and operating costs. However, the PPP assumes partial risk.

Nobel Laureate James M. Buchanan noted that aside from political considerations, optimal use of

essential resources is important to public owners for two reasons, the desire to preserve the asset and the need to generate income for maintaining it. Therefore, one problem with the PPP option is that a private firm could potentially maximize its returns by setting high fees, in which use of the public asset would be less than optimal. On the other hand, low user fees result in over-usage, congestion and depletion.

Another PPP downside is that in a financial crisis, governments can be pressured into renegotiating long-term obligations. Nearing the end of any partnership, there is an incentive for each to contribute less than the efficient amount of effort. Why, then, should a service be offered through a PPP rather than solely through a government agency? The answer depends on whether it is reasonably certain that the partnership offers more and better quality output at a lower cost/higher return than the government alternative.

In 2008, an Australian/Spanish firm, as part of a public-private consortium, leased the Indiana Toll Road (ITR). Former Indiana Governor, Mitch Daniels, was criticized for “selling” the Toll Road, previously financed, and operated exclusively within state government. The Toll Road was leased not sold. PPPs are a valid option for public service delivery, as long as governments have good legal counsel and the know-how to oversee cooperation with private entities.

It is important to distinguish between state capitalism and the private financing of infrastructure. State capitalism, in either its corporatist or socialist form, does not limit itself to effectively creating and maintaining infrastructure; rather, it uses the power of the state to favor certain industries and to promote economic growth. That is not the focus here. Rather, it is the private sector’s role and, at times partnership, in facilitating access to safe and needed infrastructure.

Creative Contracting

Australian PPPs evolved out of an economy characterized by rule of law, labor scarcity and

relatively extensive organizational skills. As such, the model may not be transferable.

Initiatives, similar to PPPs, in the U.S. are couched in terms of “innovative contracting.” U.S. government agencies tend to design internally and bid out construction, rather than collaborate with a private firm from start to finish. Recently, however, state and local authorities are exploring alternatives. In full compliance with all regulations, a light rail in Portland, Oregon, financed by Bechtel Enterprises, was in operation years if not decades sooner than otherwise (Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, 2007).

Subcommittees of the U.S. Congress actively discuss European versus U.S. practice for on-time delivery of quality infrastructure. Responsibility for on-time delivery can be shifted from taxpayers to private firms. In these instances, the firm determines how to build the project, seeks financing and arranges for private insurance. Performance-based warranties reduce the potential for substituting sub-standard inputs and extensive project litigation.

Unfortunately, U.S. officials considering innovative contracting experience strong pushback. Long-time domestic contractors are adversely affected when other firms offer successful bids. These contractors are not accustomed to accepting financial risk and resist cost increases associated with warranties on long-term performance. In addition, interest groups, labor and various government agencies can cite examples of gullible government officials entering into private agreements with non-compete clauses and increased costs due to poorly written contracts.

Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs) suggests that U.S. officials have forfeited control over regional transportation policy to firms accountable to shareholders rather than the public. As an alternative, it recommends paying private operators “availability payments.” For example, the state of Florida makes annual “availability payments” to ACS, a Spanish-owned firm, for over 35 years. Availability payments compensate the private company for the cost of

building and operating express toll lanes alongside I-595, but payments are incentive-based and the state sets toll rates and collects revenue (Baxandall, Wohlschlegel, and Dutzik, Private Roads, Public Costs, U.S. PIRG Education Fund, Washington, DC, 2009).

If non-standardized public-private financing models evolve in the U.S. they will probably experience higher political and financial start-up costs. Through trial and error, creative contracting will vary from state to state and between industries. However, this trial-and-error approach along with U.S. litigiousness offers some protection from infrastructure performing in as careless and slovenly a manner as authority permits.

We hope that Yankee ingenuity in good governance and effective intermediary institutions may reassert itself yet in providing and maintaining infrastructure. ♦

Was the 2020 Election in Indiana Fair? We Don't Know

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A small group of people stood around a few tables in a conference room inside the Indiana Government Center on Aug. 18.

A lady in a yellow blouse was in the thrall of explaining something to a few others who were leaned in to her and hanging on every word, while a man in a red shirt seated behind a long table was showing something on a piece of paper to a couple of others who'd circled around him.

They were so engrossed that they didn't see me approach and I had to interrupt to get them to notice me.

"Excuse me. Is this where the Indiana Election Commission is meeting?" I asked.

They all stared at me for a couple of seconds.

"It's over," one of them said.

"They didn't take any questions or anything. They just left the building," another one said.

It was 1:30 p.m. The meeting had started at 1 p.m. How could it be over?

But it was. And those who'd remained in the room . . . I didn't know them. But I instinctively knew who they were and what they were doing there. They had come to get answers, and they'd stayed because they still didn't have any, and didn't know how to get them.

An extraordinary thing happened after the November 2020 election. About every reporter and editor working for every newspaper in America, and every broadcast journalist working for every television station, told readers and

viewers that there had absolutely not been any fraud in the election and more or less refused to cover any evidence that pointed to any. They helped provide cover for what will probably go down in the history as the biggest political story of our lifetimes – the theft of a U.S. presidential election on a national scale.

I watched most of the election hearings held in the states.

In a phone conversation earlier this year, Indiana State Sen. Greg Walker, a Republican representing parts of Johnson and Bartholomew counties who sits on the elections committee, told me those hearings were not real hearings, only publicity stunts.

It was stunning to hear a Republican officeholder say something so obviously false.

Most were indeed *real* legislative hearings.

The hearing in Wisconsin was held in the State Capitol building in Madison on Dec. 11, 2020. It was a joint hearing before the State Senate and the State Assembly election committees and included seven hours of testimony, including from a man who testified that his elderly father's vote was stolen from him in a nursing home by nursing home employees (he had advanced-stage Alzheimer's and had no idea a presidential election was even taking place, yet somehow he'd cast a vote). The man had driven 80 miles to beg legislators to do something, pointing out there were more than 300 nursing homes in the state and that if only 10 votes were stolen in each one, you'd have 3,000 fraudulent votes.

This is just the small potatoes.

There were hundreds of thousands of illegal ballots that were counted in Wisconsin, including 170,140 absentee ballots that were accepted without an application when state law says an absentee ballot "shall not" be issued without an application first being received by the clerk, and if it is, it "may not" be counted.

"Shall not." "May not." This is very clear language. This is the law, passed by the elected representatives of the people.

But Democrat clerks determined to defeat Trump violated it, and suffered no consequences.

At the first state election hearing, held in Pennsylvania the day before Thanksgiving, Rudy Giuliani said in his opening statement that what happened appeared to be a “common plan” carried out in Democrat-run cities in several states to “skew” the election for Joe Biden.

Those states, of course, were Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, Nevada and Arizona.

It appeared to be a “common plan,” he said, because many of the same things happened in these states, including Republican observers locked out of rooms where hundreds of thousands of ballots were being counted in violation of laws that say that representatives of campaigns and parties, and also members of the media, may observe the count.

It seemed to be just this group of states, with the focus on the big Democratic cities in these states: Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Milwaukee, Madison, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Phoenix and Tucson.

But now another theory has emerged — a theory that not only did the Democratic Party focus on select, Democrat-run cities in six states, but they also padded the Biden vote in all of the other states, even solidly Republican states like Indiana.

Why would they do this? Why would they bother with states like Indiana when they would have enough electoral college votes without it after stealing the six states above?

Presumably because people would have a hard time believing that Biden won Wisconsin and Michigan if he were to get completely wiped out in Indiana. It would be about impossible to believe he won Pennsylvania if he couldn't come anywhere close to winning Ohio, a bellwether state. It would just be too obvious that something had been done in those select six states. And this would draw scrutiny.

But if numbers could be pumped up everywhere — if the Biden vote could be padded in all 50 states, at least in a dozen or so counties in

each state — then everything might look a bit more believable.

What About Indiana?

So what do we know about Indiana and election integrity? How secure is your vote here?

It's not secure at all.

Indiana is one of only eight states in the country that in 2020 was still using voting machines that have no paper ballot back-ups. Sixty percent of voters in the state live in counties using these kinds of machines (called DRE machines), according to a study that was released in October of 2020 by the Indiana University Public Policy Institute.

This makes Indiana the state with the fifth highest percentage of counties using machines with no paper backup — after Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Tennessee.

The problem with these machines is that you can't audit the vote. There are no paper ballots that can be counted as a check against the numbers that show up on the voting machine printouts.

It's as though you're working in a busy retail store and at the end of the night, you don't count the cash drawer. You just go from the computer print-out and have to trust that that is how much money was received that day. No one does this. You always, always, always count the drawer as a check against the machine. You don't just take it on faith that the dollar amount that shows up on the computer printout is the amount of money in the cash drawer. That would be insane.

And this is just money. When we're talking about votes, we're talking about something much more precious: the health of the nation, and the confidence that we are really being governed by those who have our consent.

It's hard to understand how Indiana could have allowed these machines for so long. And it's interesting to see where they're being used.

Voting machines with no paper backups are being used in three of the four most populous

counties in the state: Lake County (Hammond, Gary), Hamilton County (Carmel, Fishers, Noblesville) and Allen County (Fort Wayne).

This is interesting because Lake County, in the northwest corner of the state, was identified by former intel guy Seth Keshel as having the highest number of what appear to be “excess votes” — votes that are over and above what can be expected from looking at voter registration numbers and population trends.

Keshel was one of the presenters at Mike Lindell’s cyber symposium in August and is pushing for full forensic audits to be done in every single state. His contention is that there are a minimum of 8 million excess Biden votes across the nation.

Hamilton County is another one of the counties in Indiana he identified as having many more votes cast in November 2020 than one would expect — a suspiciously high number.

Hamilton County, of course, is the famously Republican county just north of Indianapolis, and the county with the highest average household income in the state. It’s also the fastest-growing county in the state for the fifth decade in a row, and grew 26.5 percent between 2010 and 2020.

The Hamilton County Numbers

The big election night news here was that the city of Carmel, the largest city in Hamilton County, went for Biden. It was the first time in its history that Carmel had voted for a Democrat for president.

“I don’t believe it,” a friend of mine who lives in Carmel said flatly in a recent phone conversation. She works in real estate. She knows every neighborhood in Carmel, and loads of people, including newer residents who’ve moved there in recent years.

Carmel frequently makes it onto those lists of “best city in America to raise a family” and other such lists given its top-notch public schools, low crime, great jobs and good urban planning (it has more round-a-bouts than any other city in the country). A lot of new people have been moving in — people from Chicago and the east coast — and

many tend to be more moderate. But this doesn’t really explain things.

Look at the numbers.

Trump won Hamilton County, as would be expected. In fact, he got a big increase in votes in the county, going from 87,299 votes in 2016 to 101,587 in 2020, an increase of 16 percent.

It’s funny, because it’s the same thing I saw when looking at the upper-middle class suburbs around Milwaukee: Trump increased his vote by 10 to 18 percent in almost every town and village in the Milwaukee suburbs. It was clear that some of these Republicans — educated, upper middle class — had been unsure about him in 2016, but now were happy with what he had done as president in four years.

But the Biden vote was something else altogether. Joe Biden got 88,390 votes in Hamilton County in 2020, which is 54 percent more votes than Hillary Clinton got in 2016, and 101 percent more than Barack Obama got in 2012. To put it another way, Biden got almost exactly twice as many votes as Obama did in 2012.

Yes, yes, Hamilton is the fastest-growing county in the state. But it’s not growing quite that fast. A rough workup of the numbers seems to show that the only way Biden could have truly gotten 88,390 votes in Hamilton County in November 2020 is if about every new person of voting age moving into the county between 2012 and 2000 was a Democrat — *like, every one*.

This is just barely possible. It’s also ridiculous.

On the next page are the election results for the last four presidential elections in Hamilton County.

Between 2010 and 2020, the population of Hamilton County increased by 26.5 percent, going from 274,555 people in 2010 to 347,467 in 2020. That’s an increase of about 73,000 people.

But . . . 26.2 percent of the population of the county is under 18 and can’t vote. When you take out the under 18s, you’re down to 54,750. But that was over 10 years. If you want to compare 2012 with 2020, you have to take out another 20 percent (assuming that the rate of population growth was more or less steady over that decade).

This gives you about 43,800 new residents of voting age between 2012 and 2020.

But Biden got 44,595 more votes in 2020 than Obama did in 2012, when we can assume that every Democrat who had a bit of breath in him would have come out to vote for the popular president.

If younger people make up a larger share of those who are moving into the county, people less likely to have children, it's possible that 44,595 new residents of voting age moved into the county in those eight years. Entirely. But like I said, every single one of them was a Democrat? Every single one of them was an American citizen and therefor eligible to vote? Every single one of them registered to vote?

Ridiculous.

Hamilton County needs to be heavily scrutinized.

First, what do we know about it?

We know that in a September 2020 study, just two months before the 2020 general election, Judicial Watch identified Hamilton County as having the worst-maintained voter roll in the state. The number of names on the county's voter registration roll exceeded the number of eligible voters in the county by 113 percent, they found. But that was with the census estimates.

With new census numbers having since been released, we see that Hamilton County's voter roll still shows more people registered to vote in the county than the number of people age 18 and up who live there – thousands more.

As of Nov. 3, 2020, there were 260,082 registered voters in Hamilton County, but only about 256,430 people age 18 and older living in the county.

2008		
McCain	61%	78,401
Obama	38%	49,704
2012		
Romney	66%	90,747
Obama	32%	43,796
2016		
Trump	56%	87,299
Clinton	37%	57,214
2020		
Trump	52%	101,587
Biden	45%	88,390

Not good.

Why would the voter roll in the county have so many people on it who have either passed away or moved away? Why isn't this voter roll being maintained?

Section 8 of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, commonly known as the Motor Voter Law, requires that states and counties maintain voter rolls and have a system for regularly removing people who had passed away, moved away, or become ineligible for some other reason.

Indiana has been sued twice for failure to maintain its voter roll: the first time in 2006 by the U.S. Department of Justice and the second time in 2012 by Judicial Watch.

The Judicial Watch suit notes: "The State of Indiana has a history of failing to comply with its obligations under federal voter registration laws."

On somewhat of a side note, the suit also notes that when the organization sent a letter to the state of Indiana – to then Secretary of State Charlie White and also the Indiana Elections Division co-chairs Bradley King, a Republican, and Trent Deckard, a Democrat – pointing out this problem with its voter roll and indicating its intent to file a lawsuit, King and Deckard bizarrely misunderstood, and wrote back denying what they said was a "grievance" and misspelled the organization's name.

This is what King and Deckard wrote:

"IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED . . . That Co-Directors having determined that the complaint or grievance filed by Justice Watch, Inc. (sic) with the Election Division (and designated as 2012-1) does not set forth a violation of NVRA or IC3-7 even if the facts set forth in the complaint or grievance are assumed to be true, hereby

DISMISS the complaint or grievance.” (*Emphasis original*)

At some point, King and Deckard realized that they were being sued, and that it wouldn’t be up to them to affirm or deny the so-called “grievance” — a judge would be doing that.

After considering this reality, perhaps with the help of their attorneys, they realized their mistake and agreed to clean up Indiana’s voter roll. I’ll come back around to King in a minute.

The suit was settled in 2014, with Indiana committed to taking several steps to remove ineligible voters from the rolls.

But here we are again, with voter rolls not being maintained.

The person in charge of elections and responsible for maintaining the voter roll in Hamilton County during both of these suits and after was Kathy Richardson, now known as Kathy Williams. She was the elections administrator in Hamilton County for more than two decades while also serving as a state representative. She’s now the county clerk.

Williams was the person who was in charge of elections in Hamilton County when the county began using voting machines with no paper trail that are manufactured by the Indiana-based company MicroVote General Corp.

The McKinney Tally

In the primary in 2020, something happened that could give us a clue about what may have happened in the 2020 general — or, to be more direct about it, about what someone might have done.

A longtime county councilman named Rick McKinney, a fiscal conservative who had almost always been the top vote-getter in Hamilton County, suddenly lost his primary to a woman who appeared to have only recently become a Republican.



Here is a link to an advertisement in the campaign of longtime county councilman Rick McKinney, a fiscal conservative who had been among the top vote-getters in Hamilton County. In the 2020 primary election, though, he unexpectedly lost to an opponent who appeared to have only recently become a Republican.

“I tried not to, say, I have sour grapes or whatever,” he told me in a recent phone conversation. “But the first couple of days I was in disbelief or shock at how I could have lost coming from four years earlier being number one to then being number 5 of 7. My issues did not change.”

What was interesting was that just a couple of years earlier, he had opposed the proposed purchase by the county of MicroVote poll books and proprietary software, saying he was worried the electronic data could be used to benefit favored candidates, and not made equally available to all. It was a million-dollar contract, and by opposing it, he held it up for two years.

It was in the next election, in the primary in 2020, that he lost his race for re-election.

He hadn’t even come in second or third. And shockingly, he’d lost Carmel.

“She beat me by 3,800 in Carmel and I had always dominated Carmel,” he said. “And this time I came in fourth or fifth in Carmel and I had always been number 1 or number 2, for 24 years.”

There was no major controversy, nothing that he can think of that would have caused voters to turn on him.

“My core issues were the same: public safety, parks and infrastructure, which has never been a problem,” he said.

What also struck McKinney as odd was that on the ballot, his name was in between two challengers, who had both won.

He wondered how that was possible. He also wondered why, when the election results were reported, the names were not in ballot order, saying this had never happened. He’d called the county elections office, and they told him to call MicroVote.

“I got ahold of the MicroVote programmer and he quickly said, ‘Oh, they requested that order,’” referring to the county elections office. But the county elections office told him they hadn’t requested it.

I ask if he thinks it’s possible that MicroVote could have retaliated against him for holding up their contract for two years.

“Absolutely,” he says. “I try not to think about it, because it would probably make me cry at night.”

It wasn’t long after I talked to him that I found a news report of a similar incident involving MicroVote machines in Johnson City, Tennessee, just six years earlier, also in a primary. The county’s election website showed that the incumbent had won, but in fact, the order of candidates had been flipped, and so the wrong vote totals were assigned to the wrong candidates. It was called a gaffe, with MicroVote saying a programmer had forgotten to hit “save” on the controlling computer when he’d put the candidates in proper order.

In Hamilton County, there is now a new elections administrator. Her name is Beth Sheller. The 2020 election was the first presidential election in the county under her watch. When I talked with her by phone in late August, she assured me that the MicroVote machines aren’t connected to the Internet and can’t be accessed remotely and therefore are completely secure.

I asked her if she’d seen the New York Times article from 2018 entitled, “The Myth of the Hacker-Proof Voting Machines.” She had not.

I’ve mentioned this article to other county clerks and elections administrators and have yet to come across one who has read it, or even heard of its existence. It’s very strange.

The article is maybe one of the best pieces of journalism ever produced on the topic of election security – in particular, the security of voting machines. In the piece, a county elections office in Pennsylvania is surprised to find out that its voting system is connected to the Internet when they were 100 percent sure that it was not. They had no idea that a contractor working from home had tapped into it for 90 minutes the night before a presidential election. Ya.

The gist of the piece is that no voting machine in use in America is hacker-proof. Even if the voting machines themselves – the machines that people vote on at polling places – are not connected to the Internet, the election management computer that tallies the votes on election night often is. And all computers, of course, can be preprogrammed.

So what might have happened in Hamilton County? Or, to be more precise: What might someone have done? There seem to be around 30,000 excess Biden votes. Where did they come from?

Another possibility is that either a MicroVote employee or contractor added votes for Biden.

Another possibility is that an outside hacker added votes for Biden.

But votes have to be connected to actual voters – or, at least, to names on the voter roll. And here is why it’s awfully convenient to have dirty voter rolls – rolls clogged up with the names of people who are deceased or no longer live in the county. A bad actor – a MicroVote employee or contractor or an outside hacker – could “assign” the extra votes to names on the voter roll who had not yet voted.

It’s also possible that the extra votes were added by means of absentee ballots. Of Biden’s reported total of 88,390 votes in Hamilton County, 16,074 were from in-person voting on Election Day, 25,796 were from absentee ballots

(mail voting) and 46,520 were from walk-in voting prior to Election Day (early voting).

What Is to Be Done?

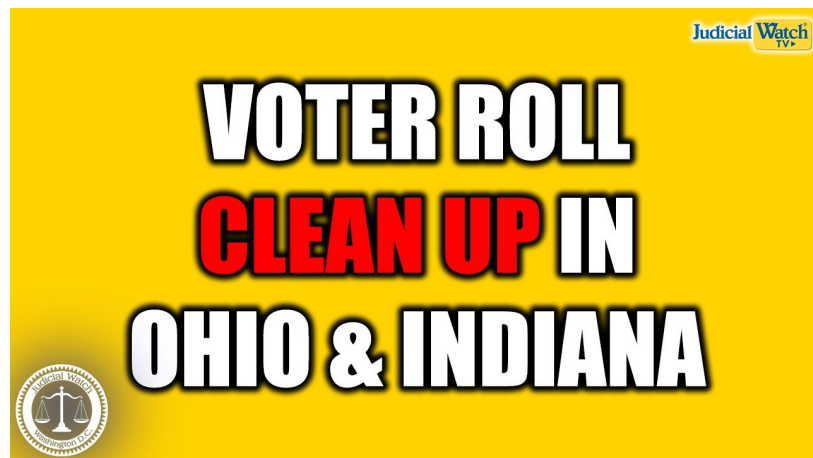
Even though the voting machines have no paper trail, I believe that there are some things that can be done and should be done to try to find out what might have happened in Hamilton County.

One would be to determine what records exist, paper and electronic, that recorded vote totals at various times during the day on Election Day and election night on the election management computer, and then to submit a public records request to get those records.

Another would be to narrow the focus to a few precincts, and to plan a canvas of these precincts, on weekends when people are likely to be home. I've picked out five precincts in Carmel that Trump won in 2016 but somehow lost in 2020. They are Clay Northwest 2, Coxhall, Clay Center 1, Saddle Creek and Spring Farms.

A voter roll can be requested from the county showing the names and addresses of all of the people in a particular precinct, and whether they voted in the 2020 general election (though of course it won't show for whom they voted). The roll can be requested as a walk list, or can be ordered this way by someone with a bit of skill, so that canvassers can walk from house to house. The goal would be to find out if the voter listed on the roll does in fact reside at that address, and whether he or she did in fact vote in the 2020 presidential election.

What might canvassers find? Maybe that someone who is shown as having cast a vote in Hamilton County hasn't lived there for some time. Maybe that someone who is shown as casting a vote in Hamilton County cast a vote in another state or county, and their Hamilton County vote was stolen. Maybe that someone shown as having voted in Hamilton County is in a nursing home



Double click on the artwork above to hear what Judicial Watch had to do to get Indiana and Ohio to clean up their voter rolls.

elsewhere and did not in fact vote, or is deceased. Maybe that there is no one by the name listed on the roll as having voted in the county actually living there.

The entire roll should also be scrutinized, and checked for double names, double votes and people voting in more than one county. More than 20,000 college students likely reside in Hamilton County, at least part of the year. How many of them voted in their college town and also cast a vote in Hamilton County?

Concerned citizens should also immediately form an organization to press for a full release of all data related to the November 2020 election, and should insist upon an independent review of the MicroVote voting system by outside computer security experts.

MicroVote machines were used in Indiana in November 2020 in the following counties: Adams, Allen, Bartholomew, Blackford, Boone, Clay, Clinton, Daviess, Decatur, DeKalb, Delaware, Dubois, Fayette, Fountain, Franklin, Grant, Greene, Hamilton, Hendricks, Huntington, Jasper, Jay, Jefferson, Johnson, Knox, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Lake, Laporte, Lawrence, Marshall, Miami, Morgan, Noble, Orange, Owen, Parke, Perry, Pike, Pulaski, Putnam, Randolph, Rush, Scott, Shelby, Spencer, Starke, Steuben, Sullivan, Tippecanoe, Tipton, Vermillion, Wabash, Warrick, Wells, White and Whitley.

Note that in all of these cases, these MicroVote voting machines have no paper ballots. Thus there is nothing to audit — no way to do risk-limiting audits following an election to verify that the voting machine tallies are accurate.

But some other counties are being audited after every election. Under a pilot program begun by former Secretary of State Connie Lawson, some audits of the election results were done in some counties following the 2020 election.

The strange thing is, the Secretary of State's office won't tell me which ones.

I've emailed, and I've called. And they won't tell me.

On Aug. 18, after getting stuck in traffic in Martinsville and arriving late to the Indiana Government Center and missing the entire Indiana Election Commission meeting, I was determined to get some answers. I went upstairs to the Indiana Election Division office and walked in the door.

I had called this office maybe 25 times between January and June. In most cases, no one picked up the phone. Several times, I'd left messages for the Republican co-director, Brad King.

In the last voicemail message I left, I urged and pleaded for him to return my call. I said I wanted to find out which counties were audited in 2020, and to get those audit reports. He never called back. I also left messages for Valerie Warycha, the Republican lawyer for the Election Division, asking her to call me with this information. I also emailed her. I never got a response.

I'd also contacted VSTOP, the organization at Ball State University that examines and certifies voting machines used in the state for the Secretary of State's office. They emailed back, telling me to contact Valerie. But Valerie refused to respond. I'd also submitted a public records request for all election audits done in the counties in 2020, and hadn't been able to get it.

So now I was doing what reporters do when public officials don't return their calls: Show up at their office and refuse to leave until you can get some answers.

Valerie Warycha came out first. I asked her point blank why she hadn't returned my calls and emails requesting the audit reports, and she responded that it was decided at the time not to provide me the information.

Stunning.

Brad King came out next, and I asked him which counties were audited in 2020. He didn't know. I asked him to find out. He said he could not do it. I would have to submit a public records request.

I submitted the request right then and there, scribbling it out on a page in my reporter's notebook and handing it to him. His office responded by email a few weeks later, saying they don't have the records, and to contact the Secretary of State's office. I already have. I submitted my public records request for the audit reports to Secretary of State Holli Sullivan's office almost four months ago. They are now in violation of the law, and willfully withholding these audit reports from me, and from all citizens of this state.

If we want answers, we have to press people. If we want audits, we have to insist upon them. If we want to prove the Indiana vote for Biden and maybe other candidates like Gov. Eric Holcomb was padded, we're going to have to prove it ourselves. And the public officials who are standing in our way, blocking access to information and refusing to conduct audits, are going to have to be replaced. ♦

U.S.-China Trade: An Indiana Perspective

From 2001 to 2018, Indiana lost 85,800 jobs as a result of trade with China. This equates to 3.3 Indiana jobs lost for every job that trade with China has created here.

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With hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of tariffs on one another's products, the U.S.-China trade war has entered into its third year.

Both sides are experiencing economic consequences of trade barriers. For example, from 2017 to 2019, exports from the U.S. to China fell by \$26 billion or 25 percent. Exports from China to the U.S. fell by nearly twice that amount in dollar and percentage terms. The impact of reduced trade between the world's two largest economies is, likewise, making itself felt at the state level. Indiana exports to China are down nearly 30 percent (Burris, 2019).

Prior to the trade war, the flow of goods out of and into the U.S. were on an upswing. In 2018, the U.S. exported \$2.5 trillion worth of goods representing a 7 percent increase over the prior year. Likewise, in 2018, U.S. imports reached a record \$3.1 trillion (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

To put these amounts in perspective, of the entire U.S. GDP in 2018, 27 percent came from imports and exports. Even after accounting for the 2 percent drop in total U.S. trade as a result of the trade war U.S. economic activity from trade remains consistent with the global 25-30 percent

average over the past 10 years (UNCTAD, 2018). Indiana is at the lower end of this average with global trade making up 25 percent of state GDP.

However, the Indiana economy is far less dependent on trade than the national average. After all, none of the top 100 U.S. importers or exporters by volume are headquartered in Indiana (JOC.com, 2020). Indiana imports and exports account for only 2 percent of all U.S. imports and exports. Two percent also describes the amount of U.S. imports from China that end up in Indiana. Nearly half of all U.S. states import more from China than Indiana (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

In terms of employment from trade, the story is different. Indiana is far ahead of the national average. Global trade supports close to 40 million U.S. jobs. This works out to just over 5 percent of U.S. jobs are as a result of trade (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2019). In Indiana, close to 15 percent of jobs can be traced back to global trade (Business Roundtable, 2015). Most trade dependent jobs are in small to medium size enterprises (SMEs). SMEs make up 84 percent of Indian's 8,000 exporters (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2018). Likewise, over 95 percent of the 200,000 importers and 300,000 exporters in the U.S. are SMEs (Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council, 2016). However, in Indiana, only a small percentage of exporters (i.e., <5 percent) are doing business with China.

China is the third largest export destination for made in USA goods behind NAFTA partners Canada and Mexico (Workman, America's Top 20 Export States, 2020). Machinery is the single largest U.S. export to China (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 2016) accounting for 12 percent of the total.

A high dependence on machine production also describes the Indiana economy. Columbus-based machine builder, Cummins, is the state's largest employer. Cummins is also the state's largest exporter to China. In 2019, Cummins exported over \$100 million worth of product to China. Over half of the city of Columbus GDP is from exports (Business Facilities, 2015).

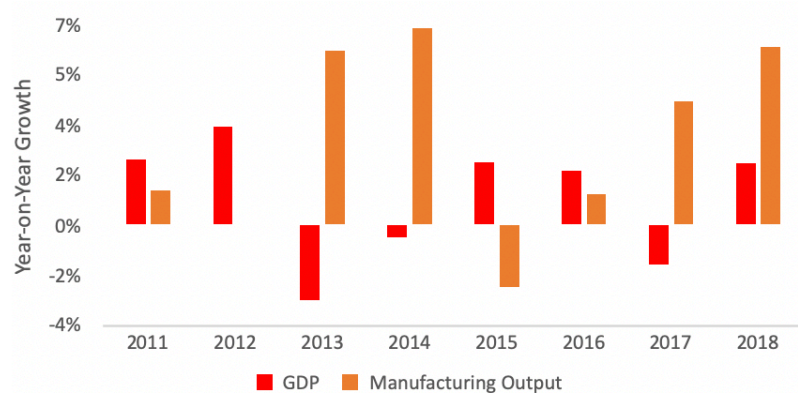
A high dependence on trade in specific product categories is indicative of U.S.-China and Indiana-China trade. Nearly half of all U.S. imports from China are in a mere five product categories. Of the 15 U.S. companies with the highest revenue dependence on China, 12 sell chips (Horwitz, 2016). None of these companies are headquartered in Indiana. Indiana is, however, a leader in U.S. China trade when it comes to pharmaceuticals. Pharmaceuticals are among the fastest growing U.S. exports to China. China is now the world's 2nd largest pharmaceuticals market. Indianapolis-based Eli Lilly and Company is the 10th largest pharmaceuticals manufacturer worldwide. Indiana's single largest export is pharmaceuticals. Nearly a quarter of Indiana exports to China are in pharmaceuticals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

From 2010 through 2019, global trade grew on average 3.2 percent per year (CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, 2020). Over this period, U.S. trade only grew 2.6 percent per year (U.S. Census Bureau, Economic Indicator Division, 2019). Indiana is well ahead of the trade growth curve. Indiana trade is growing at two times the national average. Unfortunately, most of this growth has been in imports. For example, over the past 10 years, Indiana imports increased on average 8 percent per year. State import growth exceeded export growth by 60 percent. Indiana's trade imbalance is part of a national trend.

The U.S. has run a trade deficit every year since 1976. Eighty percent of this deficit accumulated after China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. At the time, U.S. President Bill Clinton was a huge proponent of China joining the WTO:

"China with more than a billion people is home to the largest potential market in the world . . . If Congress makes the right decision, companies

Figure 1: Manufacturing Output Growth Versus GDP Growth in Indiana



Source: Data compiled from National Association of Manufacturers, 2020 (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2019).

will be able to sell and distribute products in China made by American workers on American soil, without being forced to relocate manufacturing to China. The will be able to export products without exporting jobs" (Barker, 2004).

President Clinton wasn't alone touting the benefits of admitting China into the WTO. Doug Bandow of the libertarian Cato Institute noted:

"The silliest argument against [China's membership] is that Chinese imports would overwhelm U.S. industry. In fact, American workers are far more productive than their Chinese counterparts. Moreover, Beijing's manufacturing exports to the United States remain small . . . [China's membership] would create far more export opportunities for American than Chinese concerns" (McCormack, 2010).

By 2014, China and the U.S. accounted for roughly 80 percent of world GDP growth (Koesterich, 2015). Unfortunately, U.S. manufacturing output growth has lagged far behind economic growth. Against a flood of low-priced, Chinese imports many U.S. manufacturers struggled — particularly those involved in making electronics, computers, textiles and plastics. In Indiana, where few of these products are made,

manufacturers have fared much better. Per Figure 1, the average rate of manufacturing growth in the state has exceeded the rate of GDP growth by three times.

Supporters of China's WTO membership can point to the positive impact it has had on manufacturing. From 2001-2013, U.S. exports to China nearly tripled reaching \$122 billion. Three years later that figure climbed another 40 percent. It's estimated that 600,000 U.S. jobs depend on exports to China (Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, 2019).

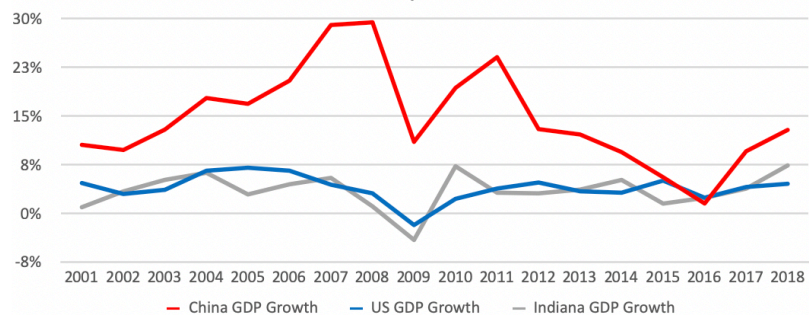
In Indiana, the story is similar. Over the past 10 years, exports to China have doubled reaching \$3 billion in 2018. Exports to China support close to 26,000 Indiana jobs (U.S. China Business Council, 2018). It could even be argued that the \$375 billion U.S. trade deficit with China isn't as bad as it appears. According to the Congressional Research Service, as of June 2019 China's investment in U.S. securities totaled \$1.5 trillion (CRS, 2021).

Moreover, of every dollar U.S. consumers spend on items labeled "Made in China," 55 cents go into the U.S. supply chain. The Indiana supply chain is directly benefiting from Chinese investment. From 2013 - 2018, 10 Chinese businesses committed to investing approximately \$250 million in their Indiana operations (IEDC 2018).

Opponents to China's WTO membership can point to the negative impact it has had on manufacturing. From 2001-2012, nearly 40,000 U.S. factories closed and 3.5 million U.S. jobs were lost. Almost 80 percent of these jobs were in manufacturing. And, nearly half of those jobs were outsourced to China (Scott, 2012). U.S. trade with China has resulted in nearly five manufacturing job losses for every job created.

The situation is similar in Indiana. From 2001 to 2018, Indiana lost 85,800 jobs as a result of trade with China (Scott, R. and Mokhiber, Z.,

Figure 2: China GDP Growth as Compared to the U.S. and Indiana



Source: Data compiled from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2020) (Macrotrends, 2020 and Macrotrends, 2020).

2020). This equates to 3.3 Indiana jobs lost for every job that trade with China has created.

Since 2010, China has been the worldwide leader in manufacturing output. The country's manufacturing sector accounts for 27 percent of GDP and 17 percent of employment (West, 2018). To put these figures in perspective, manufacturing in the U.S. accounts for only 11 percent of GDP and 8.5 percent of employment (National Association of Manufacturers, 2019). Indiana's focus on manufacturing is much more aligned with China than the U.S. as a whole. Manufacturing in Indiana makes up the same percentage of GDP as it does in China. Moreover, manufacturing jobs per capita in the state are 2 percent higher than China.

While Indiana and China share a focus on manufacturing, the same can't be said for economic growth. China's year-on-year GDP growth, as shown in Figure 2, has outperformed Indiana (and the U.S. overall) by an average of 375 percent per year since China joined the WTO.

A key reason for China's high level of sustained economic growth is exports. Chinese exports increased from \$250 billion in 2000 (World Integrated Trade Solutions, 2000) to \$4.7 trillion by 2019 (Statista.com, 2020). Exports make up roughly 35 percent of China's GDP. The U.S. economy is far less dependent on exports. In 2019, exports made up a mere 6.5 percent of U.S. GDP. In Indiana, exports as a percentage of GDP

exceed the national average by 50 percent. China has been key to Indiana's export success.

Approximately 5 percent of all Indiana exports are sent to China, ranking it among the state's top five export destinations. Per Figure 3, goods exports from Indiana to China increased 110 percent from 2008-2017 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

Indiana's year-on-year average growth in Chinese exports has exceeded the national average by 150 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Even more impressive is that fact Indiana's growth in Chinese exports surpassed the state's increase in exports to all other countries by nearly 300 percent (U.S. China Business Council, 2018). Five product categories (Figure 4) account for approximately 75 percent of Indiana exports to China.

The problem with such a high reliance on trade with China across so few product categories is balance. Per Figure 5, imports continually make up the predominance of both U.S. and Indiana trade with China.

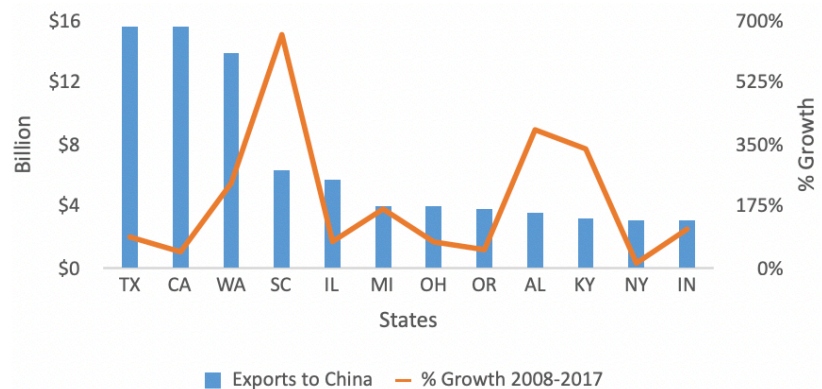
Of the 92 counties in the state of Indiana, 10 account for almost three fourths of all Chinese imports.

Indiana's trading deficit with China is in-line with the national average. In 2019, the U.S. imported 425 percent more from China than it exported. From 2016 through 2019, Indiana imports from China averaged 430 percent higher than exports.

The trading deficit with China at both the national and Indiana state level, averages 2 percent of GDP (Figure 9). In contrast, China's trade surplus with the U.S. averages 2 percent of GDP.

In light of the ongoing trade imbalance, relations between China and the U.S. have been described as the "most daunting challenge in the 40 years since the two countries established

Figure 3: Indiana is 12th among U.S. States Exporting to China



Source: Data compiled from U.S. China Business Council, 2017.

diplomatic ties" (Swaine, 2019). On the one hand, tariffs and sanctions have contributed to the slowest GDP growth China has experienced in almost 30 years. U.S. manufacturing growth is also at its lowest level in over 10 years. On the other hand, the president and CEO of the American Iron and Steel Institute credits Chinese tariffs with "increasing [U.S.] steel production, creating jobs in the industry and boosting the nation's economy (Nasciemento, 2019). Former Indiana Democratic governor and U.S. senator Evan Bayh credits tariffs on aluminum and steel with saving more than 600 jobs at the Alcoa smelter in Warrick County, Indiana (Bayh, 2020). Given the fact that two of Indiana's largest exports to China, agriculture and pharmaceuticals, account for approximately 15 percent of state employment and 20 percent of GDP, a number of Indiana government voices have also come out in favor of more equitable Indiana-China trade. Indiana Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch commented, "We are certain [the Phase One trade deal with China] will strengthen Indiana's economy and provide an even greater boost to our farmers and the agriculture industry" (WBIW.com, 2020). Indiana State Department of Agriculture Director Bruce Kettler spoke of "the positive impact [the trade deal] will have on Indiana agriculture now, and in the future" (WBIW.com, 2020).

However, not everyone agrees that placing tariffs on Chinese goods is the solution to more equitable trade. Over half of all Chinese imports into the U.S. are “intermediate goods or raw materials” (Boudreaux, 2016). As a result, tariffs raise the cost of doing business in the U.S.

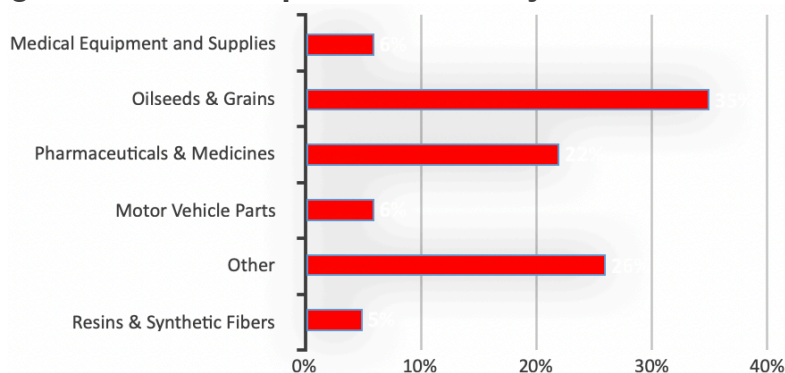
According to a 2019 survey of 1,700 U.S. small business owners, Chinese tariffs increased their costs by 37 percent. Forty-six percent of respondents admitted that they’re losing customers as a result of the tariffs (Davis, 2019).

In Indiana, Telamon Corp. reported a 30 percent increase in some component costs as a result of tariffs (Associated Press, 2019). At the Alcoa plant in Warrick, Indiana, tariffs may have protected jobs but they also increased costs. In 2019, the company paid tariffs on \$63 million worth of Chinese imports. U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg has called it “a fool’s errand to think you will be able to get China to change the fundamentals of their economic model by poking them in the eye with some tariffs.” He went on to say that “farmers have been among some of the hardest hit by China’s retaliatory tariffs” (Cole, 2019).

Amid tariffs, sanctions and changing legislation, U.S.-China and Indiana-China trade is ongoing. What has changed is how it’s being done. More and more companies across the nation and the state are pursuing “China Plus One” sourcing strategies. The aim is to continue sourcing from China, but mitigate business risk by diversifying supply chains away from China.

Cummins reduced its tariff exposure upwards of 30 percent by switching some sources outside China (Associated Press, 2019). Eli Lilly Corporation is, likewise, altering its China business model albeit in a different way. Through a partnership with China’s National Center for Cardiovascular Diseases, Lilly was able to sell rights to produce two of its antibiotics in China for upwards of \$300 million (Liu A. , 2019). The

Figure 4: Indiana Exports to China by Product



Source: Data compiled from (U.S. China Business Council,

company is currently planning “40 new launches in the next seven to 10 years” in China (Jing, 2019). Both of these examples show when business relations between countries make good economic sense free markets manage to find a way. By the same token, the signal for government intervention is when trade inequality reaches a tipping point. ♦

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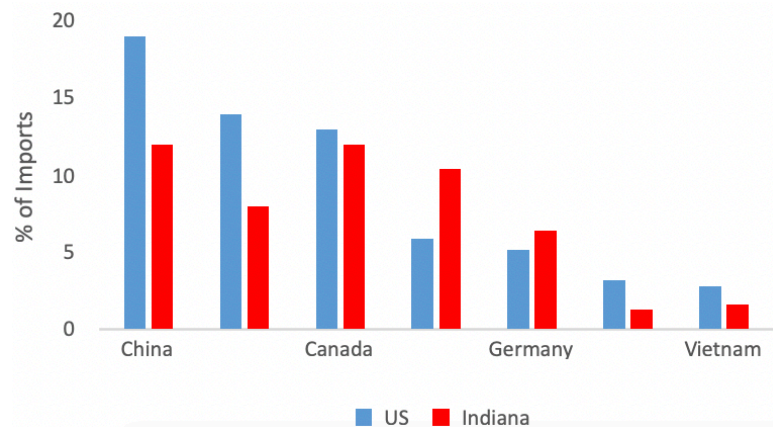
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Figure 5: U.S. Imports by Leading Trade Partners



Source: Data compiled from "Trading Economics, 2019" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

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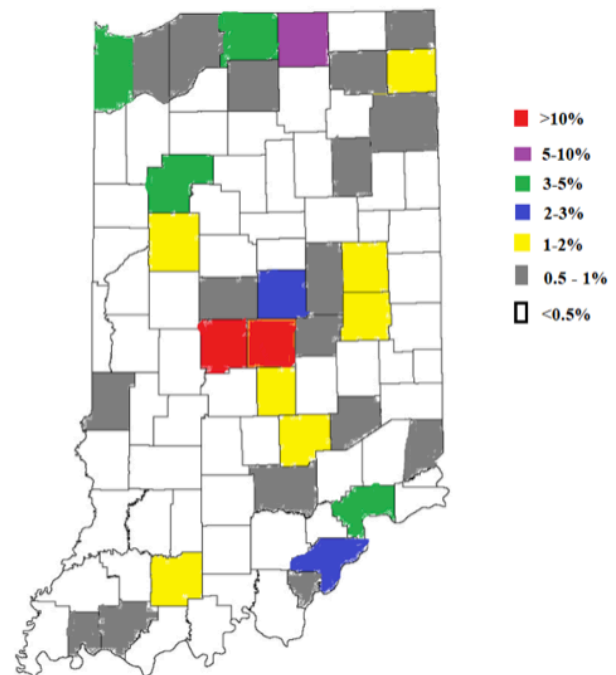
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Source: Data from Greater Indianapolis Foreign Trade Zone, Inc. Map courtesy of Samuel Seidelson.

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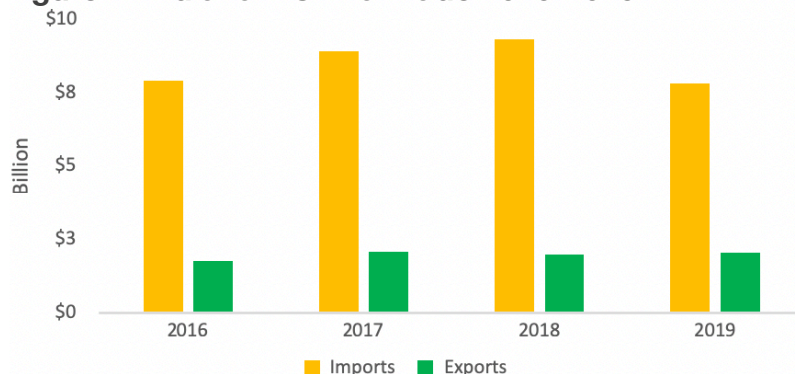
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Figure 7: Indiana – China Trade 2016-2019



Source: Data compiled from U.S. Census Bureau, 2019.

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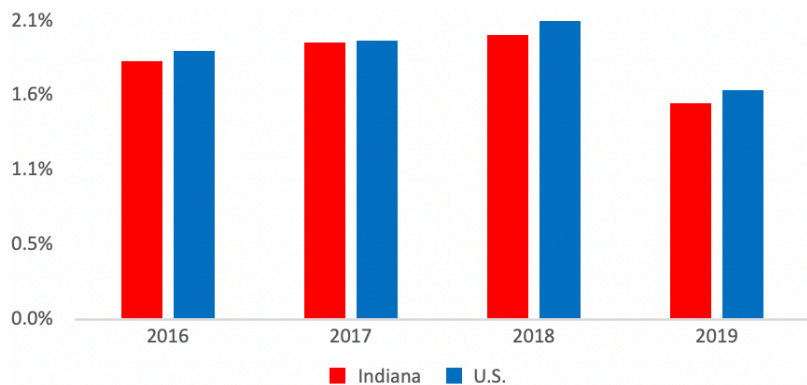
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Figure 8: State and National Trade Deficits as a



Source: Data compiled from (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019)

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Eric Schansberg

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Essential Reading for Those Concerned about Freedom of Speech

The Coddling of the American Mind" by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt is centered around three myths: 1) Fragility or what doesn't kill you makes you weaker; 2) emotional reasoning or always trust your feelings; and 3) us versus them or life is a battle between good people and evil people.

Lukianoff and Haidt (LH) argue that these three contradict "ancient wisdom," modern research on well-being and harms individuals and communities (4, 263). (Other than that, they're terrific.) They're particularly concerned about their impact on our youth, education (especially college) and democracy (5).

Lukianoff is a lawyer-activist with the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) on 1st Amendment Issues, especially at universities. His observations about college students and free speech were the chief catalysts for his work with Haidt. Administrators had always been the most conservative on speech issues, with faculty and especially students clamoring for a more liberal approach to free expression. But starting in 2013, he noticed a dramatic trend with students increasingly wanting to restrict speech. FIRE has been tracking "disinvitation" efforts since 2000. The numbers were consistent until 2009 and then especially in 2013 — with a big jump in efforts on the Left (47).

Concepts such as "triggered" also got rolling then and the complaints were "medicalized"—claims that it interfered with student ability to function. This connects to a theme throughout the

book: the importance of "cognitive behavioral therapy" (CBT), which relies on taking small direct, discrete steps to address (real or perceived) threats. You don't just talk about it; you do something about it (34). It's not so much the thing (which you may not be able to control) as your response to the thing (which you can control).

This angle is important to Lukianoff personally, since it helped him deal with his own depression. And it's something of interest to Haidt professionally, as a professor of "social psychology." (Most notably to me, he has an excellent book on religion and politics, "The Righteous Mind" (7-8).

Founded by Aaron Beck in the 1960s, CBT says "it is possible to break the disempowering feedback cycle between negative beliefs and negative emotions." (37) CBT requires skill and time, but the evidence that it works is "overwhelming." Lukianoff and Haidt cover nine common errors that CBT looks to address (38 — most of which are connected to the three myths that drive the book.

Unfortunately, the opposite of CBT is popular today: more shelter instead of dealing directly with threats and concerns. The irony: psychologists typically see trigger avoidance as a symptom of the underlying problem and certainly not its treatment (29). Lukianoff and Haidt also note that learning in general — and college education in particular — rely on a heavy dose of CBT within the process, and therefore that the myths are a threat to education (39-40).

On the myth of "fragility," Lukianoff and Haidt open with the famous example of peanut allergies which were exacerbated by keeping so many children away from peanuts (20-21). But the key concepts here are borrowed from Nassim Talib who describes people and organisms as "fragile" (inherently so), "resilient" (inherently so) or "anti-fragile" (able to develop from fragile to resilient). Talib argues that humans are anti-

fragile. It's not that difficulties make you weaker; they make you stronger. (A key caveat: too much difficulty — chronic or acute — can make you weaker.) As such, we prepare children for the road, not the road for the child (23); we don't see people as candles who need a wind-free zone (28); and as I often pray: "Lord, give us stronger backs not lighter loads."

Another problem has been the increasing prominence of "safety-ism" (30). Trouble has been defined in increasingly subjective ways and the thresholds have been defined down (e.g., from pain to "trauma"). Another recent example: Some of our society's struggles with Covid are evidently a function of safety-ism. Related to this is the use of "emotional reasoning" (an oxymoron?) and the emergence of "micro-aggressions." On the latter, people imagine the worst about others (while assuming the best about themselves). And they exaggerate problems, labeling them as "aggression" which assumes or ignores motives.

What are the implications for a college campus? Students "will come to see the world — and even their university — as a hostile place where things never seem to get better. If someone wanted to create an environment of perpetual anger and intergroup conflict, this would be an effective way to do it . . . likely to engender precisely the feelings of marginalization and oppression that almost everyone wants to eliminate." (46) It also serves to "foster an external locus of control" which is intuitively and statistically connected to less satisfaction and success (46).

The third myth is a dogmatic view of good and evil: with me as the good (of course) and some others (usually convenient, caricatured and simplistic scapegoats) as the evil. Lukianoff and Haidt note that the resulting tribalism is inevitable to some extent (and even serves some good purposes — e.g., as we take particular care of those around us). But we learn to live healthier lives by avoiding the excesses of tribalism (59). And of particular concern, we avoid the mistake of seeing others as "common enemies," generally

focusing on our "common humanity" instead (60-62). The history of "common enemies" is not pretty — with easy applications to the Nazis and Marxism. Today, identity politics has embraced this approach — what amounts to a bad religion without mercy, grace and redemption. The realities of life are more complex; common enemy and common humanity are too simple; all of us are a mix of good and evil, whether we call it "sin nature" (as in Christianity) or give it another label.

How did we get it here and how do we get better?

The middle part of the book focuses on universities as a center of this evolution — or at least its most-evident fruit. Chapter 4 details "Intimidation and Violence" as a weapon of the illiberal on college campuses. I had forgotten the sad and ironic story of Berkeley as both the leaders in free speech and then, anti-free speech (81-86). They also recount Charles Murray's run-in with fascist students at Middlebury. And they close with Van Jones' awesome quote on safe spaces and "going to the gym." (96-97) It reminds me of the Mr. Tumnus's quote about Aslan: He's not safe, but he's good. The ultimate goals are not overarching safety and short-run protection; the goals are strength and goodness. (Lukianoff and Haidt also use a great quote from SCOTUS Chief John Roberts later [193].)

In chapter 5, we get some inside baseball on academics and problems caused by and for professors in this arena. One might expect infighting, but squelching free speech and using intimidation to quiet speech and dampen academic freedom is deeply troubling. Colleges should be paragons of virtue in this regard. Instead, some of them are fueling the decline of these crucial values.

From there, Lukianoff and Haidt offer six interacting explanations with a chapter each (125). Chapter 6 discusses how a cycle of events and responses to those events have served to increase our woes in this realm. They touch on media bias — which plays to members of various tribes, to satisfy their own ideological impulses or

to make money as good media capitalists. Chapter 7 details the growth in anxiety and depression, particularly among the young and especially among girls. The advent of the iPhone, the increase in "screen time," and especially the proliferation of social media has been problematic, especially for young women. Chapter 8 describes the role of "paranoid" or "helicopter" parents — in their responses to (perceived) threats, the fruit of safety-ism, and the implications of having fewer children in the upper income classes (and the increased focus per-child that results).

In Chapter 9, Lukianoff and Haidt lament the reduction in play — particularly unsupervised activity. This decline can be linked to less ability to take risks, learn from mistakes and build social skills. Chapter 10 lays out the bureaucratic incentives within universities that have contributed: Risk-averse bureaucrats would rather err on the side of safety and conservatism than values that promote education. And in

Chapter 11, they conclude with our society's increased focus on "justice," albeit in utopian terms. They also take a big poke at social scientists, asking why they have been unwilling to apply their usual critical thinking skills to univariate analysis and false-cause fallacies with respect to complex social problems (228).

The book concludes with helpful advice for parents and K-12 (chapter 12) and universities (chapter 13). Careful readers will see these chapters as a review and summation of earlier points. But it's useful to compile all of the advice in one place.

For social observers and those passionate about free speech and education, "The Coddling of the American Mind" is essential reading. It's important to understand the cause and effect and to have empathy for what has shaped the current crop of young adults. Without this, we'll stay frustrated — and more important, less able to help them move past their fears and illiberalism to healthy lives and vibrant community.

Groceries and Schools: What's the Difference?

Editor's Note: Dr. Schansberg wrote this a few years ago but it still is a useful primer on the difficulties of government arrangements being considered today for food "deserts" in Indianapolis and Fort Wayne. It also relates those difficulties to government management of any politically commanded program that ignores economic realities, specifically K-12 education.

With the grocery store crisis in our downtowns, we should consider some out-of-the-box approaches. Recent closures have made our food "deserts" increasingly bleak.

Grocery stores in urban centers face difficult economic challenges. (Ironically, these include efforts to help the poor — e.g., free breakfast and lunch at school and charitable efforts to provide food and meals.) Often, they face political barriers as well.

Let me propose an approach similar to one in another public policy. Let's divide a typical downtown into six districts. We could put one full-service grocery store in the middle of each district. Everyone would be within a mile of a large grocery store and could get there by walking, driving, taxi, Uber/Lyft or riding a bus.

The problem is that such grocery stores would not be profitable. So, we could use taxpayer dollars to make up the difference, subsidizing the grocery stores or subsidizing their customers (allowing them to spend enough to make the stores profitable).

The federal government provides food stamps, but that's not enough subsidy to sustain a downtown grocery system. We could pursue a waiver to get that money sent directly to our city government. Then,

we could get local taxpayers to kick in some more money. The greater government spending on groceries would reduce government services elsewhere or increase tax rates and hurt the local economy. But providing food to the poor is important, so let's assume that we're willing to pay that price.

From there, we could give city residents a certain amount of food for free, depending on family size. We could provide an amount of store credit to spend. Or much easier, we could determine what would be required for a nutritionally adequate diet and simply allocate that food to each family.

Who would run these grocery stores? We could depend on the private sector. But many people would be concerned about a profit motive. And we'd be subsidizing companies, engaging in crony capitalism. So, let's have the government run them.

Who would make the food? Again, we could rely on the private sector. But if the government is competent to toll bridges and to regulate health insurance, it can probably be trusted with making food. With six large grocery stores, they would be able to achieve economies of scale in purchasing and producing the food needed by its customers.

One might reasonably worry about who will monitor the government grocery stores — on spending, quality, red tape, meeting consumer preferences, etc. But we could elect City Grocery Boards (CGBs) and Manager-Customer Associations (MCAs) to serve that function.

We could make customers go to the government grocery store nearest their house. But we could probably allow them to go to whichever grocery they want — at least with the CGB's permission. We could allow each grocery store manager to make a number of decisions. But it'd be easier to have the CGB make the big decisions for the six groceries.

Private-sector groceries would still be allowed to operate. But practically, they would only be able to compete with government groceries by getting their own subsidies or by serving niches. Jewish people might subsidize a kosher store. And a small store could be successful selling popular Hispanic food.

At this point, you may be wondering if this is all crazy. Or you may have noticed that this is the system we use to get K-12 education to the poor and most of the middle class. The comparison invites the question of whether our approach to K-12 is equally crazy.

With the election of a Republican legislature, "school choice" initiatives are on the table. In all of this, the question is not whether government will be involved with K-12 — but rather, what this involvement should look like. Should government be in the business of running schools — and if so, should it encourage flexibility through charter schools?

Or should the government even be the dominant player in providing K-12? Instead, it could subsidize lower-income and middle-class parents to obtain K-12 services in a competitive educational marketplace. This would be through "vouchers" (which are the same as food stamps) or "backpack funding" (where funding follows the child — an extension of the G.I. Bill from college to K-12).

Those who struggle with analogies will likely say, "But groceries are not the same as education." Right — and pizzas are not the same as haircuts or cars. The question then is whether the analogy holds. Or to be more direct: If this arrangement is absurd in the realm of groceries, why would one expect it to be glory in K-12? ♦

Leo Morris

Leo Morris, columnist for *The Indiana Policy Review*, is winner of the Hoosier Press Association's award for Best Editorial Writer. Morris, as opinion editor of the *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel*, was named a finalist in editorial writing by the Pulitzer Prize committee.



The Flip Side of Civic Involvement

(Aug. 16) — Early in my newspaper career, I learned that our education reporter had tried to engineer a takeover of the school board behind the scenes.

He was also a parent, and he was unhappy with the elementary school his children were assigned to. He wanted some changes made, which would have been unlikely with the board as then constituted.

On a personal level, I could admire his civic engagement in caring about his children's education, but on a professional level, I was horrified. This was exactly the kind of conflict of interest our journalism professors had warned about. Reporters should not cover things they are involved in. Aloof objectivity and all that.

No one else, it seemed, cared all that much, however. Not our newspaper bosses, most of whom came from an earlier era when professional ethics were a bit more flexible. Not even our readers, who understood that "everybody being in everybody else's business" was all but inevitable in a small community.

But how things have changed since then.

Ethical dictates, for one. The goal of dispassionate neutrality — "Just the facts, folks, and use them to make up your own minds" — has given way to unabashed advocacy.

Too many journalists today seem comfortable not only with pushing their preferred agenda, but even with censoring "wrong" ideas that don't fit the narrative.

And civic engagement has diminished greatly in our "bowling alone" era of retreating to digital enclaves where political discourse amounts to little more than slogans battling in bumper-sticker partisanship. Boards full of citizens elected and appointed have been able to shape their communities, quietly and in large part without interference. Very much a behind-the-scenes endeavor.

There are signs, though, that civic re-engagement may be occurring, at least when it comes to school boards.

Across the country, parents and community members are storming board meetings in record numbers, making headlines when they protest curricula gone astray. Critical race theory and transgender demands, in particular, have made ordinary citizens question the direction education is taking in this country.

Here in Indiana, it is the fallout from the Covid pandemic filling up school board audiences — mask mandates, vaccination requirements, remote teaching broadcast from empty buildings.

"It is inconsiderate and unfair for individual patrons to disrupt the meeting where we have to adjourn or recess the meeting," the executive director of the Indiana School Board Association told an Indianapolis TV station recently. This disturbing trend, the newscast noted, "has happened at school board meetings across Indiana."

Surely this is a good thing.

Not the disruption, of course. Civic engagement should be civil, not excessively confrontational or pointlessly rude, especially if the goal is to change reluctant minds rather than just to get attention.

But if children are our future, then getting their education right should be the top item on our list of priorities. And if public schools are to be a meaningful part of that education future — many people today doubt that — communities must reassert themselves.

I don't envy school board members' frustrations as they try to serve many masters — schools of education, politicians from all levels of

government, teachers, parents, children, taxpayers. And I don't doubt the sincerity with which most approach their efforts.

But I can't help feeling they've taken a wrong turn.

The current wisdom seems to be that a school board should be conduit for top-down policy, making sure the latest in expert-approved pedagogy is adopted in every classroom of every school. But its original mission was to be a conduit for bottom-up policy, the forum through which a community preserved its traditions, expressed its values, set its standards and dictated its educational needs.

We still have the right, and the absolute need, to control education locally, to dictate what is taught and how it is taught, how it is judged and graded and to what ends it is pursued.

Some believe, with justification, alas, that we have lost control of the federal government and are losing it at the state level.

But we can still make a difference locally. Pay attention to what is being done. Attend meetings and speak up. Organize. Even run for election or encourage someone you believe in to run. As my reporter colleague on the education beat knew, a school board seat is relatively easy to win.

If we still have a common culture in this country that can be rediscovered, celebrated and passed onto future generations, it won't filter down from any person or group's national agenda, but bubble up from communities.

One school board at a time.

Diversity Jeopardy

(Aug. 9) — Three points to ponder if for some reason you have put "diversity" on your list of things to agonize over today.

1. At our weekly bridge game, my friend the Navy veteran was kidding me a little about something my branch of the service supposedly did.

"The Army's promotion board is going to start putting the photos back in candidates' packages

because not enough minorities are being advanced."

But he had to email an apology because it turned out that the Navy was also engaging in that bit of social engineering.

From Stars and Stripes:

"The Navy could include service photos in promotion packages again after data suggested minorities are less likely to be selected blindly in some situations by promotion review boards, the service's chief of personnel said Tuesday.

"Diversity among leadership dropped after photos were removed last year from Navy promotion packages, Vice Adm. John Nowell said during a panel discussion on diversity and inclusion at the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space conference.

"... Former Defense Secretary Mark Esper directed all services in July 2020 to eliminate photos from promotion and selection boards to support diversity in the ranks. But Nowell said adding them back could do more to build a more diverse leadership force.

"It's a meritocracy, we're only going to pick the best of the best, but we're very clear with our language to boards that we want them to consider diversity across all areas,' he said. 'Therefore . . . I think having a clear picture just makes it easier.' "

Try to follow that. The photos were taken out so the candidates would be judged solely on merit, not something superficial like skin color. But not enough people of the right skin color were promoted, so the photos will go back. And still this is called a 'meritocracy' in which only the "best of the best" will be chosen.

2. Very soon after the bridge game came the news that the show runners of "Jeopardy!" were in final negotiations with Mike Richards to be the permanent host to replace the late Alex Trebek. Richards has been the show's executive producer and, if you can remember back that far, was the second of 16 guest hosts given a trial run.

Those trying out were a dizzying mix of sex, ethnicities, sexual orientations and religious

affiliations, everything a modern inclusion and equity advocate could hope for. But when the show seemed to go with just another boring white guy, there were howls of outrage – it was a “diversity fakeout,” one fan claimed on Reddit.

Personally, I think the show’s producers, with their phony talent hunt, and its critics, with their incessant cheerleading, equally missed the point. It’s about the contest and the players, not the host. I didn’t care for LeVar Burton, the apparent crowd favorite, because he was too ostentatiously exuberant. I disliked Aaron Rodgers for the opposite reason; he was so laconic he put the audience to sleep.

I favored Big Bang Theory co-star Mayim Bialik or former Jeopardy! champion Buzzy Cohen because they both had the right mix of charm and low-key enthusiasm that would allow them to grow with the show and let it shape them, the way it did Trebek.

But that’s just me.

I don’t want to get into the whole “diversity is our strength” versus “we must seek common ground” debate, either as a military veteran or a longtime trivia fan. I would just point out that organizations will generally get what they work for. If it is diversity they want, it is diversity they will get. If they want something else, such as excellence or productivity, they will get that.

An organization should therefore clearly state its goal – whether it is to defend the United States against its enemies or to entertain while possibly informing a few million viewers – then hire those best able to further that goal. Anything else is utter nonsense.

Oh, almost forgot. I promised three points.

3. Of those two diversity issues, guess which one has engaged the public imagination.

Social media are on fire about the Jeopardy! controversy. Thousands and thousands of people are chattering back and forth about what it means for television and the health of our society. Hardly anyone, on the other hand, is saying a single thing about the Navy.

Make of that what you will.

Justice by the Point System

(Aug. 2) — Today’s column offers a serious exploration of a way to solve the crime problem once and for all. So, if you’re reading this in your car, put the phone down so you don’t miss the point.

And so you don’t get four points. Under a provision of a law that just went into effect this year, those are the demerits against your driver’s license for using a cellphone without a hands-free device while driving. Another new provision will add four to eight points for speeding in a school or construction zone.

These provisions are added to the existing system of violations that gives us penalty points for things like failure to use headlights (two), disregarding a stop sign (four) and following too closely (six). If you accumulate points ranging from 20 to 42 within a two-year period, your license can be suspended for periods ranging from a month to a year.

Of course, if the violation is serious enough – driving while intoxicated, for example – the whole point system is superseded, and the state goes immediately for suspension. But the point system for “minor” violations is an invaluable way to keep a watchful eye for accumulated evidence of drivers who may be guilty of road unworthiness.

Some of my fellow libertarians, as expected, are upset at what they see as government intrusion into what should be personal discretion. If we are penalized not for the accidents we cause but for our actions that might theoretically cause an accident, well, that is just state nannyism.

But I applaud the state.

Driving is a privilege, after all, granted to us upon our acknowledgement and acceptance of the rules of the road. If we follow those rules and know most other drivers do as well, we have a reasonable expectation of having mishap-free travels.

And who can honestly say the system doesn’t work? Yes, there are many accidents, even some fatalities. But have you ever heard newscasters talk of a deadly epidemic on the roads? Have you

ever seen mayors or governors wringing their hands over what do about a sudden traffic fatality crisis?

Traffic regulations, in fact, are exactly the kind of laws libertarians always say they want. The rules don't tell us where we have to go or what kind of vehicle we have to drive. They are minimally intrusive, designed solely for the purpose getting us to our destinations as safely as possible.

Which makes them perfect for use against all crimes, not just those involving safety on the highway.

Think about it.

The crime debate is held hostage today between two extreme camps. On the one side, we have those forever in search of "root causes" and eager to forgive almost anyone for almost anything. On the other, we have tough-on-crime zealots who want to lock up shoplifters and jaywalkers and throw away the key.

What we need is a way to balance those two extremes, find a way to imprison the truly dangerous miscreants but allow those who commit minor offenses to remain free to learn the error of their ways.

Why not a point system?

Everyone gets a "stay out of jail" card, and each offense is assigned a number of points. Things like jaywalking and loitering would get the minimum dings on the card, one point. Public intoxication would be worth two points. Embezzlement would get three points. Burglary would get five points, but home invasion, with the residents still there, would garner seven points.

And so on. Get a certain number of points within a two-year period and you go to jail for the designated amount of time.

For more serious offenses, such as murder and rape, the point system would be superseded, and the criminals would go directly to prison. But not everyone who commits a so-called "crime" is destined to become a career offender. The point system would let us watch for accumulated evidence of habitual wrongdoing tendencies.

Now that I think of it, we might even want to consider a separate point system for the most serious crimes. Not all murders, for example, are equal. Surely there should be fewer points for a gang member killing another gang member than for a kidnapper who kills a hostage. And then there are the special cases where the murder might be heinous but not likely to be repeated, such as killing a spouse in a violent rage.

That's probably a little more controversial, though, so we should try the point system on lesser offenses first, just to get a feel for how it might work,

For those who consider this proposal outlandish, just consider how far down that road we have already gone. Plea bargaining is a kind of point system that trades lesser offenses for bigger criminals. "Victimless crimes" are cited all the time by public safety officials trying to prioritize their efforts. And don't forget all the leaders in some of our major cities who have decided to overlook even arson and looting when committed by groups with favored status.

A word of warning here. If you don't think this column is worthy of serious consideration, give yourself a point. And don't think no one is keeping score.

What Pence Was Asked to Do

(July 26) — For those who haven't been keeping up with the Congressional Clown Car, a quick update:

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi created a special committee to investigate the Jan. 6 — take your pick — mostly peaceful protest/riot/insurrection.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy appointed five Republicans to the 12-member committee, including Jim Banks of Indiana's Third District.

Pelosi rejected two of them, including Banks, because (in the words of more than one news account) they "had voted to overturn President Joe Biden's election" and it therefore would be ludicrous to expect them to be objective.

McCarthy then announced that Republicans would boycott the whole process.

Imagine, members of Congress participating in a congressional investigation not being objective.

If I may, an interpretation of what is going on: Pelosi wants the committee to declare that Trump is an evil man whose anarchic followers want to destroy everything this country stands for. McCarthy wants Trump to be seen as the heroic victim of a rigged system run by statist zealots who want to destroy everything this country stands for.

That analysis seems indisputable to me, but I can hear the shouts of dissent from across the great divide. Democrats are supporting the fairness of elections and defending the Constitution. Republicans are supporting the integrity of elections and defending the Constitution.

I don't mind the pathological partisanship. Well, actually I do, but I accept it as an unavoidable force animating today's politics.

But I wish we could at least agree to argue about the right thing.

President Trump did not, in point of fact, ask Vice President Mike Pence to reject the electoral votes resulting from the November balloting, therefore Banks and the other Trump-supporting nominee (Jim Jordan of Ohio) were not supporting efforts to "overturn the election."

The Constitution gives states the authority over the selection of electoral votes, based on state legislatures' duly authorized procedures. In several states, notably ones Trump lost by dubious margins or under suspicious circumstances, governors or election officials ignored those procedures and made up new rules on the fly.

Legislators from some of the states asked – formally, in letters – for more time so they could determine whether the illegal conduct was enough reason to toss the existing certification of electors and submit new slates more accurately reflecting the states' votes.

There is not a consensus among constitutional scholars over what powers the vice president might or might not have over electoral disputes, so we can have a legitimate and (we can only hope) respectful debate over the issue. But to be

clear: He was being asked to give those legislatures more time. He wasn't being asked to overturn anything.

Don't misunderstand. I'm not claiming the election was stolen or even that there was massive fraud, and won't unless there is compelling evidence. I'm saying there were actions bound to make reasonable people suspect the election wasn't honest.

And maintaining trust in our election process should be important to everyone. This is, or should be, about more than Donald Trump, even for the most partisan Democrat.

In fairness, I would add that Republicans looking to the future should also be careful about not making everything about one man, making Trump a cult hero merely because the other side paints him as the devil incarnate.

Banks is the new chairman of the Republican Study Committee, a powerful House group tasked with charting the GOP's future. Trump was by no stretch of the imagination a conservative, but his agenda championed many conservative ideas, and he built a solid record of accomplishment on those ideas. But he was too brash and unorthodox to survive his success.

The conservative ideas still remain, however. They are worth defending and advocating, and they are the most deserving of Banks' main focus. The side with the best ideas should win, not the side better able to wage a war of personalities.

And that will still be true long after the echoes of Jan. 6 have faded.

How to Spend My Tax Refund

(July 19) — I so want to be a good Hoosier, an upstanding citizen who will do the right thing.

But Indiana officials are set to give me some money, and I'm terrified that I will squander it on frivolities and let my beloved state down.

Well, not "give" me money exactly. So that I won't be tempted by a sudden infusion of cash, they plan to disguise the gift as a "tax credit" when I prepare my 2021 return sometime next year. That might result in a larger-than-expected

refund, or perhaps I will owe the state less than I ordinarily would have.

To give our officials credit, they made heroic efforts to keep the money in state coffers instead of letting it escape into the economy to corrupt the public morality.

When legislators approved a law capping the state's surplus at 12.5 percent of spending – with half the extra going to taxpayers if the threshold were hit – most of us recognized it as a mere goodwill gesture. Nobody really expected the state to give money back to the people from whom it was taken, which goes against the natural order of things.

But to our horror, that trigger was hit in 2012, and every individual income tax filer got a \$111 refund. And we all remember the wild abandon in 2012 – sometimes still referred to as the Year of Debauchery – when Hoosiers succumbed to an orgy of reckless extravagance.

And this year, the unthinkable – an even greater surplus of \$3.9 billion. A whopping 23 percent of state spending, requiring nearly \$2 billion in refunds.

Legislators, bless their hearts, tried to avoid that disaster by draining the reserves as quickly as they could – a few hundred million here for the teacher pension fund, a hundred million there to pay off construction loans early. But that still left \$545 million required as a handout to Hoosiers.

At least officials are trying to dampen our enthusiasm. Though the surplus is more than it was in 2012, they warn, there will be more taxpayers to split it among, so we should not be expecting any great windfall.

I appreciate the effort – really, I do – but I fear the damage has been done. I am already planning on ways to spend the money, and I do not admire the avaricious person I am becoming.

I might buy a whole tank of gas at once. Imagine being able to travel nearly 400 miles without even stopping to refuel. The mind boggles.

If there's enough left over, I've narrowed it down to two choices. I might get a haircut – by a professional who actually went to school to train

for it. Or I might go out for dinner – not a quick trip to a fast-food place, but a real meal at a sit-down restaurant.

You can see the problem.

Not only am I thinking of being selfish – abusing the state's largesse by spending the money on myself alone – but incredibly shortsighted. A car trip that lasts but a few hours? A haircut that would need to be repeated in just a few weeks? One meal that would be digested overnight?

I've thought and thought, and I think I have a solution.

I will use Indiana's wonderful gift to me – however much it might be – to buy state lottery tickets.

That means the money will go back to the state where it belongs, taken custody of by sensitive civil servants who would spend the money much more wisely and fairly than I ever could.

And there is a 1-in-9.4 million chance I will win the top prize.

Damn good odds for a taxpayer.

A Gymnast Shows the Way

(July 12) — Thank you, Simone Biles, for pulling me out of the funk I'd talked myself into over sports.

On my best days I am ambivalent about athletes. I respect their prowess but resent them for my own physical shortcomings. I admire them for the loyalty they inspire among fans but hate the shallowness and casual arrogance they sometimes exhibit.

Just like I'm still in high school, in other words. We all resented them back then – called them jocks and cast doubt on their mental acumen. But it was our devotion to their teams that made them the stars all the cool kids wanted to hang out with.

My funk started earlier this week when I read that minor league baseball was asking for millions of dollars in Covid relief funds to make up for the lost 2021 season. My thoughts naturally turned to the Fort Wayne TinCaps and Parkview Field.

And it annoyed me no end.

Officials tore down a perfectly good baseball stadium that had just been paid for so they could build a new stadium with mostly public funds. Now those who profit most from the stadium – not Fort Wayne taxpayers – have hit a rough patch and are crying for federal funds.

I could probably have rebounded from that quickly enough. The baseball team is a well-run outfit, and Parkview Field turned out to be a gem that arguably helped turned downtown Fort Wayne around. And it's not just been for baseball – I had a lovely time there one evening for a Bob Dylan concert.

But once on that track, my mind then turned to all the other evidence that sports today have taken a dark turn.

Like the big cities that have poured hundreds of millions in public funds to build stadiums so pickpocketed fans can have the privilege of buying \$10 beer and \$5 hot dogs. Yes, looking at you, Indianapolis. Parkview Field's public footprint is chicken feed.

Like the obscene salaries. The top 10 pro athletes earned more than \$1 billion in 2020. Yes, I should be libertarian here and acknowledge that they deserve whatever the teams are willing to pay. But when I do the math and realize that quarterback Patrick Mahomes gets more for playing one game – a few hours on a Sunday afternoon – than I made in my whole career as a lowly journalist – it's hard to maintain perspective.

Like the fact that Indiana, after the advent of online gambling, is among the strongest markets in the U.S. for sports betting. Hoosiers bet a whopping \$254 million on sports in May of this year alone.

Like the NIL – name, image and likeness – standards all colleges will soon have allowing the athletes who make billions for their schools to start cashing in themselves. Surely, we can finally dispense with all pretense that we're dealing with "amateur athletics" here.

And on and on and on, a dismal picture when contrasted with the reality that the value of athletics is not trickling down to where it would do the most good. A 2019 report from the World

Health Organization notes that 80 percent of children aged 11-17 aren't as physically active as they should be. The average child spends fewer than three years playing sports, quitting by age 11.

But then on Sunday, I watched reports of Richard Branson's remarkable trip to the edge of space in his Virgin Galactic spaceship. He talked about his trip being a dream he had nurtured for decades, which he kept pursuing despite the setbacks and heartaches on the way.

But the fact that his vision and determination were taking us to our next step in space was lost on some of the commentators, who seemed determined to miss the point. This is just a race among billionaires in an age of great income inequality. Where will the benefit to ordinary people be – are we going to get something like Teflon out of this? Little minds trying to cope with a momentous event.

And that made me think of Simone Biles. (Come on, you knew I'd get there eventually).

Branson's attitude was the same I had heard expressed more directly by Biles.

Her routines are so physically spectacular that awe-inspiring doesn't begin to describe them. One of her moves is so demanding that other women won't even attempt it, and those who judge gymnastics are reluctant to score it properly lest they encourage others to recklessly court danger.

I saw an interview where she was asked why she kept pushing herself, even into doing routines that might not be officially recognized.

And she said just three words: "Because I can."

She does what she can because she believes she can. And that's why Richard Branson does what he does. He believes he can do it, so he does it.

We need people like them to inspire us to believe we can also do a little more than we think we can.

We need them so much we should forgive one of them for having a few more billion than we think he should have, and the other one for coming up from a sports world that seems to have taken a wrong turn.

Crime: An Outrage or Mere Problem?

(June 28) — One day last week, an 82-year-old woman named Wilma Ball was stabbed to death in her home at Lake James. According to a sheriff's deputy, it was the first homicide in Steuben County since 2016.

About the same time, a man was shot to death on the east side of Indianapolis. It was the 118th homicide so far this year in the city, already on track to beat last year's record-setting year.

I don't know if anything profound can be learned from that contrast, but it's stuck in my head now, so I have to think about it.

One thing I do know is that officials in the rural county and the big city both are talking about getting to the bottom of the murders, but I doubt they mean quite the same thing.

In Steuben County, I suspect, they are treating the homicide as an act to be punished. In Indianapolis, they are considering it a problem to be solved. There is a world of difference.

On one of the cable talk-a-thons on Sunday, a segment was devoted to the rising violent crime rate in America's biggest cities. It featured mini interviews with Biden Administration aide Cedric Richmond and Indiana congressman and Republican Study Committee leader Jim Banks.

Richmond ticked off the usual liberal talking points about the cause of crime: the proliferation of guns, poverty and the lack of opportunities, Covid-related issues. Banks reiterated conservatives' favorite themes of the proliferation of gangs, police demoralization and lack of prosecution.

So predictable, so superficial, so unhelpful.

I'm not suggesting we ignore crime-prevention efforts, either the ones showing how we can protect ourselves from criminals or the ones aiming to ameliorate the conditions that can breed crime. Each effort can help, some more than others, and each of us can list approaches we like and don't like.

But the more we concentrate on crime as a problem, the less we focus on crime as an act. And if we pass a certain point, we become so obsessed

with the problem that we can all but forget about the act.

I think we've passed that point in our biggest cities, including Indianapolis, and lost track of what the law is and is supposed to do.

It's not that hard.

It's about what we will tolerate and will not tolerate as a society, and the law draws the line between the two. We have a whole criminal justice system to deal with those who cross the line — police to nab the likely suspects, prosecutors and defenders to argue their cases, judges and juries to determine their fates.

And every time we show we are serious about someone crossing that line, the more we deter others from trying to cross it. Every time we ignore or make excuses for those who cross the line, the more we blur it and defeat its purpose.

I don't know if they will solve their murder in Steuben County, but I have no doubt they will throw everything they have at it. At if it does stay on the books, it will surely haunt more than one public safety official for a long, long time.

According to Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department statistics, nearly 63 percent of the 245 homicides committed in 2020 remained unsolved and are likely to stay so. It's probably not fair to conclude that residents of Indy are numb to that fact, but I can say from my visits there that I sense more resignation than outrage.

Heinous acts spark outrage. Problems to be analyzed do not.

The Zen of Civic Maintenance

(June 21) — When I was in my late 20s — at an age when I knew Utopia was just around the corner if only we could complete the task of perfecting the human race — I discovered Robert Pirsig's "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance."

It was the perfect bible for those of us who had achieved casual self-enlightenment through "I'm

OK, You're OK" a few years earlier. (Reject your inner parent and inner child! Embrace your inner adult! That's all you need to know.) Discovery need not be painful if the right guide can be found.

As a spiritual guide to Zen, the book was a little fuzzy, mildly preaching quality in life over quantity and vaguely extolling the virtues of becoming one with our activities. It was a small pebble sent skimming over philosophical waters, comfort for those who could talk endlessly about meditation but never bother to actually do it.

But I glommed onto the motorcycle maintenance part as a useful way to come to grips with the technological age.

The book is an admittedly fictionalized account of Pirsig's cycling odyssey across America's backroads. Two of his companions had a sleek new motorcycle. They did not understand it, leaving its maintenance to experts, and it was always breaking down on them. Pirsig had an old beater, and he did all the upkeep and repairs himself, always in control of his own destiny.

We don't have to worship technology, but neither should we be intimidated by it. We can embrace it on our own terms. As the Amazon.com description puts it, the book provides an illustration of "how we can unify the cold, rational realm of technology with the warm, imaginative realm of artistry."

Since then, unfortunately, technology has moved far beyond our control. Our lives are consumed by the services delivered digitally from ever smaller but more sophisticated devices – little blips from the ether representing books and record albums and all our everyday chores from photography and long-distance conversations to map-reading and mathematical calculations. It's a flashlight. It's a tape measure. It's a stopwatch. It's a heart monitor. It's a dictionary and an encyclopedia.

We are more and more dependent on all that software but less and less comfortable with the hardware that delivers it – know anyone who can open up a smart phone and tinker with its

innards? Our heads are in the clouds in more ways than one.

All of which makes "the art of motorcycle maintenance" a compelling metaphor for what is happening now with civics, the study of the rights and duties of citizens, or rather what is not happening.

The president of the Purdue Fort Wayne chapter of the American Association of University Professors says she "is uncomfortable with" Purdue's new rule making civics literacy, including passing a basic test, a graduation requirement. She claims students are already being grounded in civics and the requirement is "an unnecessary hoop" for them to go through.

Seems like a weak argument to me. Students have to pass tests in all sorts of subjects to graduate, so surely a grasp of the government they live under should be one of them. In a survey from a few years ago by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, only 36 percent of American adults could pass a basic U.S. citizenship test, modeled after the one taken by immigrants in the process of naturalization.

We might achieve 25 percent for the next generation, so cheers to Purdue for trying to reverse the trend.

Speaking of which, President Biden has rescinded the Trump administration's revised citizenship test. Pre-Trump, immigrants had to study 100 questions, then answer correctly six out of 10 of them chosen at random. Trump increased the number of study questions to 128 and the pass rate to 12 out of 20 questions.

The Trump version, it was said, was aimed at discouraging immigration and was somehow "skewed conservative," whatever that means. I don't get what the big deal is. In 2019, we had 834,000 legal immigrants, an 11-year-high, before the pandemic shut the whole process down.

Illegal immigration has declined in recent years, but there are already about 12 million undocumented here who have answered zero out of zero questions on a citizenship test. Civics is the hardware of the commonwealth.

We enjoy the software of citizenship and demand more and more of it – more privileges; more support, financial and otherwise; more equality of results but also more freedom of choice; more safe spots where we won't be offended, criticized or challenged.

But that software depends on an infrastructure, an intricate system of checks and balances called federalism, the nuts and bolts of which give us an unbounded opportunity while protecting us from both the tyranny of the majority and the whims of a demented minority.

As citizens, we must understand the relationships between citizens and the government in that system. We have to know the moving parts of the hardware.

Because there is no software without the hardware to deliver it, so whoever controls the hardware controls the whole system.

If the tower is down, our phones won't work. If the Internet is hacked, our credit will be at risk. If someone doesn't like our politics, our social media accounts will be suspended. If a censor decides a book isn't appropriate, better have a hard copy on hand.

We can't just leave the hardware of our polity to the experts – the politicians, bureaucrats, academicians and journalists who increasingly seem more interested in dividing us over the country's perceived wrongs than in uniting us around its strengths. They can change the software in a heartbeat, and a government of, for and by the people will be stalled on a backroad of the failed republic.

So, appreciate the moving parts, become a part of them and make them a part of you until you are one with the system.

Little Zen there. Meditate on it.

News 'Philanthropy'

(June 14) – The Indianapolis Star now has itself a team dedicated to “racial equity,” which includes, thanks to a grant from a nonprofit called Report for America, a reporter who will be tasked with covering “inequity in social services, immigration, cultural institutions, the legal system, education and access to health care –

particularly as it affects Black and Latino Hoosiers.”

The cynic in me thinks this sounds more like sociology than journalism, with the Star editors taking a deep dive into Critical Race Theory and concluding that institutional racism is so threatening to the fabric of society that they must deplore it in the strongest possible terms, earnestly and often.

My more rational reaction is that this is merely one more failed attempt in newsrooms' decades long effort to gin up interest among those who have had no interest in reading newspapers and never will. Back when I was a novice reporter, people like Jay Rosen called it “engaging the reader,” as if there were hordes of subscribers and would-be subscribers just dying to tell us what we should do for them.

But the Star's dive into inclusiveness is just a superficial symptom of journalism's current distress. What should be of deeper concern is the part about “thanks to a grant from a nonprofit.”

Journalism philanthropy, it seems, is the wave of the future. As traditional sources of revenue dry up, newsrooms are desperately searching for new funding sources, and foundations are jumping in to fill the void. The problem is that these sources have an agenda, so how can a newsroom accepting the money not heed that agenda? It will be one more reason, as if we need one, to suspect that we are not being served unbiased, objective news.

Every grant will provide a filter through which information is passed. The more grants, the more filters and the less chance readers will be getting what they need and want, rather than what the philanthropists think they should need and want.

But won't this be just like the tension that existed between the newsroom and advertisers when advertising provided the bulk of revenue?

Not quite. Advertisers were selling goods and services and wanted to make a profit. Foundations are selling ideas and want to make a difference. Advertisers wanted to change people's buying habits. Foundations want to change their hearts

and minds. One pursuit fosters greed and bullying, the other zealotry and proselytizing.

There is a world of difference between a store owner trying to persuade an editor to downplay crime reports in the neighborhood and a non-profit dictating an editor provide more “equitable and inclusive coverage.” One is trying to get something extra for his money. The other is merely expecting what he has clearly paid for.

Frankly, advertisers needed newsrooms at least as much as newsrooms needed them, especially in one-newspaper towns like Wabash where I started. There was no local TV operation, just one small radio station, no Internet or social media. You wanted to sell your merchandize, you advertised in the paper. Trying to push the publisher around was a futile endeavor.

Even in bigger cities with competing news organizations, there were enough advertising dollars to go around, and the competition was to get them by offering either the biggest or the best audience.

Radio stations did it by offering bulletin headlines between the latest hits, TV stations with blood-and-gore footage littered among soap operas and situation comedies, newspapers with a mix of what readers a lot of what they wanted and some of what editors thought they needed – hard news on the front page, “Dear Abby,” crossword puzzles and the comics inside.

Now, advertisers seek targeted audiences rather than broad coverage, and savvy consumers read online reviews of everything before making a purchase. People glimpse the news in their Facebook feeds and find amusements through social media forums. They complain bitterly on Twitter, then look around and wonder where the sense of community went.

It’s not just that the print media are dying. The whole structure of advertising-supported news is collapsing, and no one has yet figured out how to fill the void.

I don’t think philanthropy-supported journalism is the answer. The Star might win a few converts, but it will lose far more readers who simply want unfiltered, useful news.

Where’s My Nude Gardening Check?

(June 7) — I’m basically a lazy person, so I’m not opposed to the government paying me to do something I might otherwise be inclined to forgo.

But it seldom works out.

Sometimes, I’m in the wrong place at the wrong time. Ohio, for example, would have given me a chance to win a \$1 million lottery just for getting my Covid shots, but I had already been vaccinated and, alas, lived in a different state.

And sometimes even money isn’t enough of an incentive. Some states and cities are so desperate for residents they offer to pay people to move there. But I hate moving. The federal government would give me money to help offset the purchase of an electric car, but nearly 60 percent of Indiana’s electricity comes from coal, so that would be environmentally stupid.

It’s all good, though, because, truth be told, I’m actually so lazy that I would rather have the government pay me not to do things.

But that doesn’t always work out, either.

I would have been delighted to take the combined state-federal payouts for not working given to people who were not working because of the state and federal governments’ decisions to turn the Covid medical emergency into an economic crisis.

But as luck would have it, I was already not working and getting government money in the form of Social Security for not working. Before you chide me for being ungrateful, let me point out that, since I was forced to pay into Social Security, I was only getting money back that had already been forced out of me. It wasn’t the outright gift I thought I should have had.

And now Gov. Holcomb has announced he is ending the federal portion of the payouts early. For some reason, he thinks it is a harmful side effect to have more than 100,000 jobs going unfilled because people are making far more staying at home than they would earning the minimum wage.

Hey, governor, if you want to make an omelet . . .

Then there was the time when I thought could make a few bucks for not gardening.

My wife and I had a small house in Wabash with a huge side lot, so we decided to plant a few vegetables. I learned two things. One is that digging in the dirt in the hot sun is not a pleasant pastime for a lazy person. The other is that peas are a poor gardening choice. They require a lot of work and practically take over the available space, and all you get for it are, well, peas.

Since the government was paying farmers millions and millions of dollars not to grow crops, I thought I might get in on the windfall by giving up my garden. But after a few casual inquiries, I discovered I did not qualify. If you have thousands of acres, letting them lie fallow fits into some bureaucrat's grand macroeconomic scheme. But giving up a little truck garden wouldn't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world. Or peas.

I went looking the other day for the percent of federal spending defined as "transfer payments," that is, money just given to individuals.

According to one site's calculation of Office of Management and Budget Figures, it was about 68 percent last year. But another one says it already amounted to 72 percent in 2017, with "discretionary" spending expected to drop from 6.4 to 5.4 percent over the next 10 years; that category includes actually doing something, like outfitting the military and building roads and investing in R&D.

"Low levels of investment," one "expert" whined to a Senate committee, "mean lower future growth, imposing a hidden tax on future generations."

Never mind that. Where's my omelet?

Ooh, ooh, this just in. Fort Wayne, where I live, and Indianapolis, where I spend a lot of time, have just been named among the five worst cities in the whole country for – wait for it – nude gardening, according to an article in the New York Times.

Given our state's conservative nature, some might expect this ranking to continue. But trends change, as the Times reporter notes, and, "Let's face it, many of us could stand to feel more

comfortable with our bodies, and few would dispute the damage incurred by the pressure to meet our culture's unrealistic beauty ideals."

So, we might need an incentive to keep our clothes on in the pea patch.

I'll get the ball rolling.

Washington is doling out billions and billions in "Covid relief" funds for . . . well, I'm not sure exactly for what, but Fort Wayne is getting a whopping \$50.8 million of it, which it has so little need for it is setting the money aside in a special account.

For a pittance of that sum, just a few thousand dollars, I will pledge not to garden in the nude.

Oh, don't mention it. It's the least I can do, and my neighbors will offer their profound thanks.

Vietnam and the Rules of War

(*May 31*) — I was leaving the gym last Wednesday when Tony told me they would be closed on Friday and Monday.

"Why?" I asked. "What's going on?"

"Oh, you know, just adding another day off and making it an extra-long holiday weekend."

"What holiday?"

Oh, that one. Of all the ones to let sneak up on me, it had to be the one specifically designed to make us remember, to ensure that we never forget those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the country. That holiday.

To my credit, I did think about it later in the day.

I remembered Steve, the first classmate I'd learned about dying in Vietnam. I was in basic training at Fort Knox, Ky., at the time, a 19-year-old kid with a year and a half of college and not a single clue about the real world.

But I did not lament the life he would never have – the bride he would never walk down the aisle, the kids he would never drive to school, the retirement party he would never attend.

Selfishly, I worried about myself, what I had signed up for and where I might be going when training was over. Until that day, war had been an abstract idea, something in the history books or

the stories my father had told me. It wasn't something that might snatch me up and throw me away.

And maybe that was OK.

They say Memorial Day is as much for the living as for the dead, and there is a good reason for that to be so.

The truth of war is that old men send young men to die. If all we do is salute the bravery and honor the commitment of the fallen, we make it too easy for the old men to be frivolous with those young men. If we do not also focus on the grief of those left behind, the holes left in their hearts, we are inviting future foolish people to wage future foolish wars and keep throwing away young lives.

That is the lesson of Vietnam for me, the reason I could never get over that war.

It wasn't just that more than 50,000 American soldiers died; every soldier knows that is a risk. It wasn't just that it might have been the wrong war at the wrong time for the wrong reason; that's been the history of the world.

It was that the people running the war thought it was something they could fool around with, a geopolitical chess game for which the moves could be micromanaged from thousands of miles away. Then when the ultimate goal – propping up a friendly regime without being committed to defeating the enemy – proved grotesquely unachievable, they just walked away.

Oops. Sorry, just kidding. Didn't really mean it. All those lives. Wasted.

So now I think there should be three rules for war. It should never be engaged unless:

It is the only option left, all other avenues having been explored.

There is a clearly stated goal with a recognizable way to define victory.

Leaders are committed to winning as quickly as possible.

Considering our recent history in Iraq and Afghanistan, I don't think we're following those rules. Considering the "war on terror," with

no end in sight and no way to define victory, I wonder if we ever will.

I've thought about visiting the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington but never have. Now, there is a replica on permanent display in Fort Wayne, and I think about visiting it, to run my hand over Steve's name.

But I wonder if I will. I really want to but really don't as well. You know?

Fear Makes a Poor Motivator

(May 24) — When I was just a child, I roamed all over the hills of Eastern Kentucky, sometimes with friends, sometimes alone, recklessly climbing trees, exploring abandoned mines and generally tempting fate to the point of taunting it.

Our family moved to Fort Wayne when I was 12, and I regularly walked the mile from our house to Packard Park and covered even more territory on my bike. My younger brother had similar freedom of movement, and my even younger sister was able to – please don't faint – play out of sight of our mother and father for long stretches of time.

Today, such lax supervision would likely be called neglect or even child endangerment. Even if my siblings and I weren't shuffled off to foster care, our parents surely would get a visit and stern warnings from child services.

Yes, I know why things changed, how fear of the monsters among us turned parents into hovering wrecks, wringing their hands if their children are out of view for even a second. And I certainly don't suggest the world is as safe as it used to be.

But I can't help thinking we've gone so far with our protectiveness that we're robbing our children of the sense of wonder and awe that comes from exploring and discovering.

I noticed the other day that Texas has just become the third state – after Utah and Oklahoma – to pass a "tree-range kids" law to support reasonable childhood independence. As Reason magazine notes, "Parents who live there cannot be

investigated for neglect simply for giving their kids some old-fashioned freedom.”

My first thought was, how sad that such a law would even be needed. My second was hope that the 47 other states, but especially Indiana, would get on board. Fearful children become fearful adults.

And, heaven knows, we already have more than enough of those.

Another story that caught my eye was about the paralyzing terror some people are apparently experiencing over the arrival of Brood X, the billions of cicadas emerging after 17 years of hibernation underground.

A woman in Ohio has made herself a cicada shield with an umbrella and two shower curtains so she can summon up the courage to go outside. A Virginia man talks admits the anxiety he feels about tasks like mowing the lawn, and a Penn State football player confesses his “emotional trauma” at the “devastating news” from his mother that cicadas are on the way.

Our feelings of fear and disgust, says a university scientist, are “likely part of an evolutionary mechanism to protect us.”

But, come on. Yes, the cicadas are noisy and ugly, but the same could be said of a lot of people. It’s just about the insect mating dance. They’re going to have sex for a few weeks, then die.

Come to think of it, the way the world has been going lately, that doesn’t sound so bad to me, either.

For the last word, let’s turn to Mitch Daniels, former Indiana governor and current president of Purdue University, and, as is frequently the case, the only adult in the room.

Speaking to the graduating class of 2021, he noted how many of the students’ elders have failed a fundamental test of leadership during the Covid pandemic: “They let their understandable human fear of uncertainty overcome their duty to balance all the interests for which they were responsible. They hid behind the advice of experts in one field but ignored the warnings of experts in

other realms that they might do harm beyond the good they hoped to accomplish.”

Before the virus visited us, he said, “there were already troubling signs that fearfulness was beginning to erode the spirit of adventure, the willingness to take considered risks, on which this nation’s greatness was built and from which all progress originates. Rates of business startups, moving in pursuit of a better job, or the strongest of all bets on the future, having children, all have fallen sharply in recent years. And now there are warnings that the year 2020 may have weakened that spirit further.”

Telling students that “certainty is an illusion” and “perfect safety is a mirage,” he urged them to “weigh alternatives, balance priorities, assess relative risks” and have “the courage to act on the conclusions you reach.”

He closed with advice all graduating seniors need to hear, at least the ones who want to live as free-range adults:

“Take that readiness into a fearful, timid world crying for direction and boldness, where the biggest risk of all is that we stop taking risks at all.”

Amen. ♦

Mark Franke

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The Nexus of Libertarianism and Christianity

(July 4) — It is much too easy to overthink things. If this were an Olympic sport, I would be competing on national TV every four years.

Libertarianism is one such overthink for me. Over the past 50 years libertarianism and I have lived through an on again, off again relationship. It first seduced me as a college freshman and member of Young Americans for Freedom, then the home for all nuances of conservative-thinking college students. Our chapter had strong defense, support-the-war members. There were also the social issue conservatives, this being the time of heated abortion debates. Of course fiscal conservatives were there as well, decrying the Johnson and Nixon administrations for financing budget deficits with inflation. Most of us could place ourselves in most if not all these metaphysical caucuses.

On the fringe were the libertarians. I wasn't even sure what they believed, as YAF's libertarians ran the gamut from limited government, Constitutional purists to extremists bordering on complete individual freedom not much different from libertinism (same word root but different applications of the concept of liberty).

I thought them crazies, although I will admit we didn't have many at my local university. It was only after I attended the national YAF convention in 1971 that I got a true glimpse into the libertarian soul, such as there was an observable one. How could a 20-year-old reconcile responsible liberty with the demands of a long-haired, marijuana-smoking, free-loving group which appeared to rejoice in its offensiveness toward anything and anyone traditional?

It was not something a small-town boy from Indiana could reconcile.

It only got worse as I realized the fringe libertarians were not much different from the radical left in the Students for a Democratic Society. One insight I gained was that the political ideology spectrum was not a straight line running from right to left but more closely resembled a circle that didn't quite connect at the extremes.

What I failed to comprehend at the time was that this was merely a fringe, outliers who neither defined libertarian belief nor even agreed with it as a structured philosophy.

Then a wife, a child and a pressing need to graduate pushed libertarianism into the attic of my cluttered mind. A second child and a mortgage slammed the door shut. Almost. There always has been something seductive for me in libertarian theory.

For most of my adult life, traditional conservatism seemed the best fit for a husband and father who had to get two children through college on a modest income coming from a job that somehow became more and more demanding as my career advanced. There just wasn't time for esoteric philosophical musings.

So what brought me back to libertarianism? Certainly retirement was a factor, providing more time for rigorous and systematic thought. But that simply created the environment which made this thought process possible. I could blame the writings of The Indiana Policy Review, which kept pushing me toward thinking beyond the merely possible and into a brave new world that, ironically, pointed backward in time

to the Founding Fathers and their dream for our nation. But the thunderbolt that shocked me into a reconsideration of libertarianism was the orchestrated attack on our very civilization by an unholy alliance of Marxists, nihilists and anarchists, and a total surrender to them by the governing class. I first realized their possible destructiveness about four years ago.

So why would the current crop of self-proclaimed revolutionaries push my return to a college era philosophy that repelled me for its extremity, at least so far as I could remember the ideological foment on campus 50 years ago? I still had issue with the libertines who try to fit themselves into the libertarian tent. And then there is Rand Paul, the self-appointed high priest of libertarianism who never sees a hill he isn't willing to die on. We wouldn't have all the Obama Care mess today, for example, if he hadn't refused to vote for an 80 percent repeal bill only because it didn't repeal it all. Perfect is nearly always the enemy of good. Paul's conscience is clear but we're still stuck with Obama Care.

In spite of Rand Paul's serving as the poster child for irresponsible libertarianism, I still couldn't abandon it completely. For this I can credit The Indiana Policy Review once again. At one of its annual winter seminars, a presenter mentioned almost in passing an economist by the name of Arnold Kling. Kling theorized that Americans are divided into three tribal coalitions speaking entirely different languages: libertarian, conservative and progressive. Libertarians view issues on a liberty-to-tyranny axis, conservatives from civilization-to-barbarism and progressives from oppressed-to-oppressors.¹

Which am I? Well, I certainly am a conservative as I believe Western Civilization is one of mankind's greatest intellectual achievements. My disgust with and fear of the current barbarian horde which has breached our gates attests to my self-placement in this tribe.

On the other hand, my reading of the Founding Fathers — and I've done a lot of this in the past few years — has pushed me into the libertarian tribe also as I see more and more of my freedom being usurped by overreaching politicians and an insatiable government bureaucracy. Read "The Federalist Papers" to get a clear sense of how Madison, Hamilton, et. al., envisioned a limited government instituted to protect liberty. Covid was more than the camel's nose under the tent for this overreach. Is there any going back? Not that this born-again libertarian can foresee.

Can I be in two tribes at the same time? Why not? Kling's thesis notwithstanding, it seems to me that moving between two of these "languages" is a sign of an incisive intellect operating in a healthy political climate. But then I can't gainsay Kling's proposition that Americans have insulated themselves into a single language and thought discipline, although discipline is certainly the wrong word to describe this lack of intellectual rigor.

So plant me right on the libertarian-conservative 50 yard line. My problem is that I also see some things that fit on the progressive axis, if a heartfelt desire to help those less fortunate than me at every opportunity is the qualification. Am I a progressive? Every synapse in my gray matter screams, "No!" Yet, I give of my time and treasure to help those in need, so maybe I belong with the progressives too. Is this even possible?

I needed Alexander the Great's sword to cut this Gordian Knot. And I found it, in a book by an Indiana Policy Review scholar, D. Eric Schansberg.² It is really quite simple. It is a matter of properly dividing governmental fiat from private energy. It is a matter of voluntary action versus coerced action.

First, a step back in my non-linear thinking. I have listened to more than enough lectures from well-intentioned friends asserting that it is impossible for me to reconcile my political affiliation with my Christian faith. Voting for Republicans is mean-spirited and oppressive. How can I be so insensitive to the needs of the oppressed that I vote for those (insert your favorite epithet here) Republicans?

It's Kling's different languages hypothesis on steroids, the steroid here being Identity Politics. Stuff someone in a bucket and, according to the progressive creed, he forfeits all capability for independent

thought and action — and you don't even get to choose your own bucket, certainly not by personal philosophy. All identity is by outward stereotype. You are what you look like, not what you feel or think.

I no longer expect a modern progressive to understand how a Christian looks at his fellow man. By the time the human mind reconciles original sin with objective justification (all are conceived in sin while at the same time all are redeemed by Christ), there is no room for Identity Politics. All are equal sinners in God's eyes, and all are covered by His Son's sacrifice. Try explaining that to a social justice warrior. "Hate the sin but love the sinner." Now that's a non-starter for minds closed by Identity Politics.

That said, it is quite simple to put a Christian, even a libertarian one, on a progressive axis . . . but with this essential caveat: The Christian is motivated by his faith to help those in need and to do so on a voluntary and personal basis. Recall that most social welfare in the United States as well as Europe was provided by churches until the government determined to co-opt most private charity. And with what result? Compare poverty rates, single parent households, drug use, educational attainment and violent crime then and now. Do you still want to call this progress?

Remember the "WWJD" bumper stickers? What would Jesus do? The motorists who displayed this bumper sticker wanted people to treat other people just like Jesus would. It was a call to personal action. We all are our brother's keeper.

So what would Jesus do? Here's what Jesus never did: When exhorting His disciples to care for the poor, He did not send them off to petition the Romans to pass a law to tax everyone else to provide poor relief. This has become the great divide between those on the left and those on the right — using the coercive power of government to get others to do what I want them to do rather than taking personal responsibility to do it myself.

Examples in the Gospels abound. The Good Samaritan did not dump the poor traveler at some government-run halfway house; he cared for him as best he could and then told the innkeeper to send him the bill. Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus' heart, who responded by personally refunding those he overtaxed. Then there is the disciple Matthew who quit his lucrative government gig to follow Jesus. And the Sermon on the Mount stresses the private, non-public nature of Christian charity (Matthew 6:1-4).

"My kingdom is not of this world . . . or my servants would have been fighting . . ." (John 18:36 ESV). These are not the words of a social revolutionary bent on overthrowing the government through violent action as has become commonplace today. Reformation Era theologians developed the doctrine of the two kingdoms, that of earthly government and that of the church. Both kingdoms function under God's majesty and Christians are commanded to be faithful citizens of both, acting within the earthly kingdom as guided by the precepts of the heavenly one. Civil disobedience may have its place but its God-pleasing exercise is quite rare.³

Where does this leave me? I simply refuse the dilemma put forward by the ultra-left. I am neither conflicted nor confounded in attempting to reconcile libertarianism with Christianity. Libertarianism, understood through the lens of the Founding Fathers, not only supports Christian belief but also creates the political environment to encourage its manifestation in individual action. This is played out daily by kind-hearted (sorry, social justice warriors, not mean-spirited) people of faith who joyfully give of their time, talents and treasures to help others.

A 2018 research study documented a correlation between voting Republican and higher charitable contributions compared with those voting Democrat.⁴ The authors attempted to rationalize this with the spurious justification that liberals are just as charitable as conservatives when taking into account higher tax rates in their jurisdictions. Bingo. Coercion versus charity. That explains everything today, to our hurt.

Am I a conservative? Yes. The barbarians are at the gates screaming for the destruction of nearly everything I hold dear. Am I progressive? Not really, as I see charity as a personal and voluntary act rather

than a political lobbying effort to induce government to compel others through confiscatory taxation and other repressive measures. Am I libertarian? I guess so, after reading the Founding Fathers and thinking about the Orwellian world awaiting my grandchildren.

No, let me restate that. I am *desperately* libertarian. It is our civilization's only hope. — *July 4*

Endnotes

1. See “The Three Languages of Politics: Talking across the Political Divides,” Cato Institute 2013, 155 pages, \$17 hardcover.

2. See “Turn Neither to the Right nor to the Left: A Thinking Christian's Guide to Politics and Public Policy,” Alertness Books 2003, 447 pages with extensive notes, \$20 paperback.

3. For a fuller reflection on the Christian perspective on civil disobedience, see my essay “The Soul of Civil Disobedience” in the Summer 2020 Indiana Policy Review.

4. See “The Politics of Donations: Are Red Counties More Donative Than Blue Counties?” Sage Journals 2018 (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0899764018804088>).

Old School(s)

(*June 23*) — A high school senior who attends the same church as I do qualified for the state golf championship as an individual. This is a big deal for him and for all of us who know him. A big enough deal, apparently, that Huntertown, the small Hoosier town where he lives, put on an old-fashioned parade to see him off to Carmel for the tournament.

The township fire department mustered their trucks and the town utility maintenance department added a couple more. It was lights, sirens and a dozen or so friends along the route. In spite of the fact that this township is one of the fastest growing in the state, the old part of Huntertown is still a small town so the parade was a quick one from the elementary school, past the fire house and out to the highway.

This brought back memories from my childhood when Fort Wayne South Side won the state basketball championship in 1958. That was also a big deal back before class-based tournaments. The team was brought back into the city on fire trucks and my father took us out to the highway to watch. We had a vested interest in this championship as the high school was my mother's alma mater.

It must have been my weekend for nostalgia. My wife's uncle and aunt celebrated their seventieth anniversary and, of course, we attended. This was in Terre Haute, the other side of the state from Fort Wayne, but you don't miss a milestone like this.

Her uncle was an athlete in his day. One of the photos on display was of him in his high school letter sweater. Another attendee, whom I had never met, struck up a conversation about that photo and its memories.

He told me about a nostalgia sectional basketball tournament that was held 30 years ago in which alumni came back to play for their old high schools. My uncle-in-law (if that's a word) played for the since closed Fontanet High School in the day and in 1991 he played for it again.

Here in Allen County, there used to be a county basketball tournament that was perhaps more important to the county schools than the sectionals. It was played at the War Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne and carried on local radio and TV. My father graduated from Hoagland so we always watched the finals on TV if we didn't attend them in person.

Alumni from these old schools organized a nostalgia county tournament also in 1991 in which

nearly 300 former athletes and cheerleaders representing nine high schools suited back up. As I looked through the program booklet, I recognized a lot of names — some as players I watched in my formative years and others who became friends since. I asked several about the experience and they didn't need words to express the joy they experienced reliving their days of glory . . . no matter that it took more ice, BENGAY and heating-pad applications than it did back then.

There is a sad note about all this, however. I can't speak to Vigo County, but nearly all the Allen County tournament high schools are gone, both metaphorically and physically. Most succumbed to the "bigger is always better" school consolidation mantra Indiana chanted throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Small towns and townships lost the focal point of their communities when their high schools were shuttered. Frequently these schools were consolidated with those of the next town over who were, of course, their primary athletic rivals.

I can recall back in the 1960s listening to my cousins, most of whom still attended Hoagland like our ancestors, commiserating about the consolidation with their hated rivals from nearby Monroeville. If it was any consolation to them, and I'm not sure it was, both buildings were abandoned and a new school built in-between.

Just for the record, here is a recap of the unfortunate disposition of these former schools and their buildings: Seven are closed and consolidated with their buildings demolished or otherwise utilized while only two are still open after absorbing others and modernizing the buildings on their original sites. If you think I am just a cranky, whiny old grouch, check basketball game attendance numbers pre- and post-consolidation. I don't know if such statistics even exist, but I am absolutely convinced they will bear me out. Community spirit left town with the high school.

We tend to remember the good times best, even at the expense of absolute fidelity to detail. No matter. It's just God's way of keeping us from

feeling miserable all the time. So I won't dwell on these closed schools and the small towns that still mourn their passing. Instead, I will recall the intensely competitive basketball games I saw in crowded gyms with nearly the whole township in attendance. If you don't know what I'm talking about, just watch the movie "Hoosiers."

The Sad End of the Boy Scouts

(Aug. 25) — I recall, just barely, reading James Burnham's "Suicide of the West" back in my undergraduate days. While not being able to recall most of his arguments, I believe his point was that we are doing this to ourselves. He blamed liberalism, in its modern and not classical definition, for an erosion of our moral and spiritual foundations.

Jonah Goldberg borrowed that apocalyptic title for a recent book in which he blamed the woke movement for attacking the fundamental values of our American polity. His is more of a classical liberal's viewpoint but if you want to read 400+ pages of mostly depressing prose, be my guest. I haven't made it through it yet but I will keep trying.

I find it at once incredible and incredulous how quickly our political, cultural and business elites rolled over in the face of this onslaught. Take the Boy Scouts as a microcosm of this self-induced death march.

Membership in the Scouts has declined by nearly two-thirds since 2019. This decline is in spite of the national organization's well-publicized commitment to the current gods of diversity and inclusion — they now have a chief diversity officer — and they have opened membership to girls. Declined in spite of? Perhaps because of.

Sure, they can blame Covid for the decline. Every other negative trend is blamed on Covid these days, with some justification, but mostly Covid simply accelerated what was already headed downhill. There is also the embarrassing settlement of decades old sexual abuse claims to the tune of \$850 million, better than \$1,000 per

current scout and being assessed in large part to local councils since the national organization is in Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Pressure from woke cultural warriors and the LGBT lobby surely had something to do with all this. Despite winning a First Amendment Supreme Court case in 2000 upholding its exclusionary membership policy, the Boy Scouts national leadership determined to get on-board the woke train before it left the station. It seems the pressure was not applied directly to the Boy Scouts; observers inside and outside the organization point to major corporate sponsors and national board members as the targets and the actual pressure points. Moral cowardice among this crowd shouldn't surprise anyone anymore.

I saw this cultural battle firsthand. The Lutheran church I attend sponsored a Boy Scout troop for boys in our school as well as the general public. Elders of the church served as adult leaders and activities had a religious component. Parents knew that and voluntarily chose our troop for their sons.

Five or so years ago, our leaders were called to a meeting at which they were warned to expect a ruling from the national organization that we could not enforce traditional membership or leadership standards. New rules were in the offing and we would not receive a religious exemption from them.

Shortly thereafter I spoke with the national vice president of our church body, who was involved in discussions with the Boy Scouts to allow for religious liberty at the troop level. He was not confident of success. His premonition proved accurate.

We were ready when the dictate came down. Our troop leaders had been authorized by the congregation's voters assembly to return the Boy Scout charter and recharter with Trail Life USA, a similar organization which respects religious liberty and actually encourages a faith component in the boys' training. The transition was smooth and our troop now has a larger membership than before.

This has happened across the nation. The Mormons formed their own scouting organization and returned all their charters. Other church-

based troops did the same. Trail Life, for example, is pushing toward a thousand chartered troops.

The Boy Scouts were already membership-challenged with changing social mores which deemphasized and even demonized such traditional values as faith, fatherhood, families, masculinity and patriotism. It could have served as a beacon for those who fervently want to perpetuate in their sons those same values which have served us so well. Alas, the national leadership chose to be swallowed up by the nihilistic flavor of the month. Their participation numbers demonstrate that many Americans voted their disapproval with their feet.

Regardless of the cultural wilderness enveloping us, there is still a remnant which holds to traditional Boy Scout values — duty to God and country, moral uprightness, loyalty, obedience to authority, dependability and helpfulness to those in need. They and their sons and grandsons can no longer find that in the Boy Scouts . . . assuming the Boy Scouts even can continue to function as an organization.

Rest in peace, or good riddance? Either way, it is a sad commentary on where America is headed.

Absolutes Define any Culture

(Aug. 18) — I am blessed in having many exceptionally intelligent friends, several of whom deserve the adjective brilliant. Most have doctorates in something and I don't hesitate to query them on every occasion which presents itself.

One such friend is a semi-retired theology professor. Every time I listen to him, I feel like my mind is about to explode. He is enlightening and humbling at the same time. My reaction to hearing him is usually, "I never thought about it like that."

In a recent sermon to seminary students, he asked a simple question: "Tell me a time when the entire reality which lies outside the psychic self is denied, when the substance and the foundation of identity is on the vagaries of psychic instabilities."

I have an above average knowledge of human history so that should have been easy. It wasn't.

I began by mentally rewinding every chapter in my undergraduate western civilization textbook. What I managed to recall was that every major period was anchored on certain foundational and universal truths. To be sure, these universals were challenged at pivotal times such as the Reformation and the Enlightenment but these were calls to replace part of that foundation, not eliminate it and leave a void.

The foundation was an objective one, even when challenged. The purpose of these challenges was to question what was true, not to deny truth itself. Whether all the successful challenges improved the common understanding of truth is a legitimate question. I would suggest not, even mostly not. Wrong or not, our ancestors accepted the existence of universal truth; the only debate was about what was truth.

I first was confronted with a subjective understanding of truth in an undergraduate ethics course. Those were the days of situational ethics and “I’m OK; You’re OK” memes. I was the only student who believed that truth was objective and universal. Everyone else didn’t. This was 50 years ago.

I recall studying Socrates’ statement that “I know that I cannot know anything.” The smart aleck college freshman in me immediately responded, “How can you know that?” Unfortunately Socrates’ thoughtful skepticism was radicalized and eventually degraded into nihilism. If you are not sure what nihilism is, just watch the news.

It has certainly gotten worse in the half century since those college years. I’m not sure I can clearly explain the differences between modernism and postmodernism or when someone flipped the switch between them. No doubt it was a gradual progression, or regression, but it has certainly accelerated in the past three or four years in its tacit acceptance by our hubristic ruling class.

Maybe it’s not philosophical. Perhaps it is simple humanity. The Ten Commandments end with admonishments against coveting, wanting what belongs to someone else. One of the seven

deadly sins of the early medieval church was envy. That is about as self-centered as one can be.

A recent speaker I heard blamed it on consumerism, which he defined as “what’s in it for me?” That is simplistic yet accurate in its own way. This prompted another college memory, that of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The pinnacle of human existence for Maslow was self-actualization, rather egotistical to my way of thinking. I sure got tired of hearing about Maslow.

This flies in the face of that self-evident truth so elegantly asserted in the Declaration of Independence as a series of unalienable rights. The quasi-atheist Thomas Jefferson acknowledged these to be “endowed by [our] Creator,” a statement of objective reality. We don’t self-actualize these; we begin with them as gifts from God if Jefferson is to be believed.

If reality is viewed as totally subjective within myself, where does this lead? To what can I anchor myself when times get tough? In a word: nothing. I am out there all alone. Perhaps that is what Henry David Thoreau meant by “lives of quiet desperation,” lives void of meaning which grasp material things as an ineffective sop.

Maybe the refuge is in narcissism. The narcissist gives every appearance of being self-actualized. Think of our two previous presidents, both accomplished narcissists who never showed any self-doubt. Then reflect on where we are today after 12 years of their leadership.

Western civilization, built on a foundation of universal truths, brought about stunning advances in fields such as philosophy, theology, literature, art, government, science and medicine. If we pretend that there are no universal truths, we fool only ourselves. Culture itself is put at risk.

Culture matters, and we have inherited a cornucopia of great and beautiful things. It is incumbent on us to preserve it, advance it and pass it on to the next generation. Without the transcendence of absolute truth, our cultural heritage is nothing more than a curiosity cabinet of geegaws.

It is, it must be, something much more than that.

The Supreme Court

(Aug. 4) — I wouldn't want to be on the United States Supreme Court even if I were qualified. It seems those poor justices can't even come close to Abraham Lincoln's observation that you can please some of the people all the time let alone all the people some of the time.

It begins with their confirmation hearings which are nothing less than public campaigns of character assassination reminiscent of the Salem witch trials. Somewhere, sometime in your past you may have done something that can be blown out of all proportion by the current mob of self-appointed puritans residing in the U. S. Senate and the national media. No matter if it is true or not. Just ask Brett Kavanaugh.

It doesn't end with your confirmation. The witch hunters are still trying to salvage something out of those false accusations to impeach Justice Kavanaugh now that he is serving. No matter that the FBI debunked them quite handily.

They can't impeach all the justices they don't like so Plan B is to stack the court with an adequate number of tame justices to override the current majority. That ploy has a mixed history, the most recent incident being a stain on the FDR legacy.

Then there is the occasional oral threat to rule my way or else by the current egotist-in-chief residing on Capitol Hill. This usually receives immediate rebukes from the civility minded, which provides a modicum of encouragement for the future of our republic.

I suppose the justices have developed tough skins for this kind of bare knuckles political discourse. The Constitution does insist they serve for life so they can shrug it off, at least publicly.

But it must hurt when their putative supporters turn on them after one or two decisions which don't pass muster. Social conservatives are disappointed that the new conservative majority on the court hasn't aggressively reversed much of the unfortunate

decision-making during previous terms. Judicial activism, so rightfully deplored when exercised by liberal judges, is now expected from conservative judges as a matter of political payback. It's the adult version of the schoolyard defense, "He did it first."

There is even a philosophical fig leaf for this kind of thinking, called "common good originalism." Developed among Roman Catholic conservative thinkers, it sets moral law above the Constitution. I'm all for moral law but the other side has its opinion of what is moral and what isn't, and I don't like their opinion. What is to protect the rest of us from a temporary majority trampling our rights in the name of a specious morality?

For conservatives to use their current court majorities at the Supreme Court and at the district level is "the end justifies the means" kind of thinking. It is short sighted in that the other side will have their day as well. It is hypocritical in that it is being advocated by some, like the common-good originalists, who should be supportive of what the Constitution actually says. And it will ultimately fail.

One can't help but wonder if some of our conservative brethren oppose an activist judiciary only when it rules the wrong way. Understand the point here: these conservatives want the judiciary to legislate rather than review, just like progressives demand.

Judicial activism should be abhorred, unless one uses the definition suggested by George Will in his recent book, "The Conservative Sensibility." I was shocked when I first read in the book that he argues for more judicial activism, which I thought was the last thing that thinking conservatives wanted. Then I finally understood what he is proposing. The courts, in Will's opinion, should be quite active in reviewing laws and executive branch actions to ensure they comply with the Constitution. His concept of judicial activism is not to be a de facto legislature but to act as the brakes on legislative and executive overreach.

To do this, the justices absolutely must review cases strictly as they are presented. Ofttimes this

produces a narrowly worded opinion that stays within the confines of the case they heard and to the disappointment of those who wished for a broader decision. Individual cases should not be viewed as invitations to trespass on legislative prerogatives. We are suffering from too much of that kind of judicial activism.

Justice Anton Scalia, a hero to many originalists, made the point succinctly in a 1992 dissent. “Value judgments . . . should be voted on, not dictated.” It doesn’t require a Ph.D in constitutional law to understand that is what the Founders had in mind by assigning legislative authority to Congress, executive authority to the President and a referee function to the Supreme Court. John Marshall got it exactly right in his Marbury decision.

We either believe in the Constitution or we don’t. I do.

Combining Baseball and the Army

(July 28) — There are a lot of benefits of retirement, likely many more than I realize or appreciate, but one is enough free time to follow my local minor league baseball team. The Fort Wayne TinCaps are High A this year with a roster of players who hope to be only one or two steps away from the majors.

Fort Wayne has produced a lot of major leaguers over the 28 years of the franchise. The most successful in monetary terms is Fernando Tatis Jr., a current wage slave of the San Diego Padres to the tune of \$340 million.

Fort Wayne has always been a baseball town. The Fort Wayne Kekiongas played in the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players, the first professional league prior to the formation of the National Baseball League. (Yes, that National League.) Unfortunately the Kekiongas went broke in 1871 but only after making the record books for winning the first game ever played under the auspices of a professional baseball league.

Even with no more Kekiongas, the city wasn’t done with making baseball history. The first professional night game was played under lights

in Fort Wayne in 1883 according to local lore even if not uncontested among baseball historians.

So much for reminiscing about a time before I was born. Coming back to this year of grace, my lifetime love of baseball has been stoked to a white-hot heat now that I can afford both the money and the time to hold season tickets. When still gainfully employed, I would attend TinCaps games (or Wizards as they were absurdly named when they first came to Fort Wayne) as often as time allowed. It wasn’t nearly often enough and I was jealous of my retired friend who had season tickets. Several years ago my wife asked me what I wanted to do for Fathers’ Day and I replied with one word: TinCaps. That day I resolved to buy season tickets so I could go to all the games

I wanted seats near my retiree friend so I ended up next to the visitor’s dugout at field level. There are better views of the field but I won’t move. I have made new friends of the other season ticket holders as well as the ushers assigned to our section so going to the game is a fundamental part of my pathetic social life.

The best thing about my seats is that I am right at the on-deck circle for the visiting team. This gives me the opportunity to talk to the batters as they come out of the dugout. I don’t heckle; 30 years as a volunteer assistant coach in Division I men’s volleyball left me with no tolerance or respect for hecklers. Instead I compliment them on great defensive plays, previous home runs or other impressive athletic feats. Most respond, if only with a thank you, and those who don’t are likely too intense on preparing for their next at bat.

Last week the Dayton team was in town and their right fielder put on an offensive and defensive show. He made two spectacular diving catches the first night, got a couple of hits and ran the bases with abandon. Checking his biographical information, I learned that he is a Hoosier from Zionsville and a graduate of West Point. West Point? My neighbor, a retired Army colonel, was with me that night and he didn’t think the Army allowed newly commissioned

officers to take a sabbatical to play professional sports before serving their military obligation.

Thank you, Internet, as we discovered that this young man is the first West Point graduate to be granted leave to play professional baseball before assuming his army career. The next night I brashly called out to him as he passed toward his dugout before the game and he immediately came over. We talked for about five minutes about his army career in the air defense artillery and the expectations the army has for him.

Jacob Hurtubise understands his responsibilities to represent the Dayton Dragons and Cincinnati Reds while still representing the United States Army. Although officially commissioned as a second lieutenant, his teammates have begun calling him “Colonel.” No wonder. In an interview with MLB.com, he said, “If my jersey’s not dirty, I did something wrong.” After the first game of the series, his jersey was reasonably clean but his pants were shredded at the back pocket and on the side from his slides. He did nothing wrong which this grizzled old fan noticed. And his teammates should promote him all the way to field marshal.

Eventually the army will get Lt. Hurtubise back but, based on what I saw last week, it won’t be anytime soon.

A Non-Athletic Career

(July 21) — As I sink deeper and deeper into my dotage, I try to husband what brain cells are still functional for what matters most. That means being discriminatory about what I allow inside my cranium. To start, I pay no attention to popular culture. I absolutely refuse to watch movies or I don’t listen to music if the original composer is still living. I haven’t seen a contemporary TV show in decades, at least not voluntarily.

I do read a lot and often come across a name I haven’t heard before. Indiana Policy Review columnist Leo Morris wrote last week about an amazing gymnast, whose name I have already forgotten. As is my wont, this triggered the bank of memory cells which remembers the past in a

selective manner. In this case the memory was of my underwhelming athletic career.

Morris mentioned a study that the average child’s athletic participation ends by age 11. That is certainly true of my stillborn baseball career. My misfortune was to get bifocals at age nine, making it difficult to decide which pitched baseball coming at me to swing at.

Youngsters are resilient, so I transferred my attention to golf by getting a job as a caddy. By the time I reached high school, I was working in the pro shop and playing golf every chance I got. The problem was that those chances became fewer and fewer in number as I was working six days per week from sun-up to sun-down. I think that was probably in violation of the wage and hour laws for teenage employees, but I loved it . . . except for the unpleasant reality that my inadequate golf skills were deteriorating rapidly due to lack of exercise.

That should have put paid to my athletic career except for a chance discussion years later during a Friday night happy hour over a favorite adult malt beverage. The university that employed me had started a men’s volleyball program and the new coach was trying to generate a following. He asked me to be an honorary assistant coach and sit on the bench at home matches. I agreed despite the fact that I knew absolutely nothing about volleyball at this level.

This went on for a few years until one of the other assistants told me either to become useful or to get lost. I was assigned the job of charting the other team’s offense with the goal of being able to predict the opponent’s next play. At risk of immodesty, I actually became proficient at this. My trademark was a specially built clipboard that held six full size sheets, one for each rotation. (A volleyball rotation is the way the six players arrange themselves on the floor and it changes with each new server.)

I did this for nearly 30 years, helping out during the good years and the bad. The best year was 2007 when we played in the NCAA Division I national championship final match. The experience of walking out on the floor of St.

John's Arena at Ohio State that night is one memory that I will always cherish.

There is something about the camaraderie that develops among a coaching staff which served together for so many years. Long bus rides, killing time at the hotel before an evening's match and Saturday morning team video sessions all helped in building what have become lifelong friendships among us coaches and our wives.

It wasn't all fun but even the bad memories can morph into amusing anecdotes given enough time. For example I was personally cited with an NCAA violation for giving a free ticket to the pastor of my church. It seems that the NCAA, guardian of the sanctity of amateur athletics, is quite restrictive on complimentary tickets used by volunteer coaches who must be watched closely lest they err. I stand with pride along such NCAA miscreants as John Calipari, Jerry Tarkanian and Kelvin Sampson in the NCAA hall of shame. Unfortunately, no alumni offered to buy out my contract to get rid of me.

All good things must come to an end so I eventually retired with the other senior citizen coaches and we turned the team over to a younger generation. I still attend all home matches, at least those which allow fans in this Covid world. The current coaches see that my family and I are put on the team pass list. I'll risk another NCAA rules violation to keep close to the team that received so much of my time.

Would I trade those years for anything this world has to offer? No way, except maybe for more grandchildren.

A Patriotism Checkup

(July 7) — Having passed three patriotic observances — Memorial Day, Flag Day and Independence Day — provides an opportune moment to reflect on the status of patriotism here in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

What is its status? That depends on whom you ask, where you look and at what you look.

If one spends the day in front of the television watching national news channels, one can't help but conclude patriotism is dead or in hiding. The

talking heads, apparently in some kind of competition for the most extreme statement trophy, will leave your mental health in a witch's brew of "gloom, despair and agony" and "deep, dark depression; excessive misery" to quote song lyrics from the down-home philosophers of the 1970s hit TV show "Hee Haw."

A recent book, "Fears of a Setting Sun: The Disillusionment of America's Founders" by Dennis Rasmussen, argues for just such a failed ending for our republic based on what the author saw as the pessimism expressed by most of the Founding Fathers in our nation's early years. If one buys into Rasmussen's premise, Washington, Adams, Jefferson and Hamilton all despaired of the new constitutional republic's ultimate fate. (He does note that Madison was the optimist in the group.) Yet here we are, 245 years later and still kicking.

But kicking how? What we see on TV and in sports stadiums are professional athletes kneeling during the National Anthem, demands for Old Glory to be replaced with something appropriately woke, the asinine 1619 Project pushed by what used to be considered the newspaper of record, and on and on. Even the Statue of Liberty is now under attack. Is our nation on the brink of a self-ignited implosion? Yes, if your only perspective is cable news or national newspapers. It was a good run for the USA but it must be over . . . and deservedly so.

Not so fast, at least if we refocus our perspective right here in Indiana. This is what I heard and saw over the past weekend.

I counted 72 American flags flying on my short cul-de-sac, not counting red, white and blue bunting and ribbons nor the U.S. Army flag flown by my veteran neighbor. There were plenty more throughout my addition.

My wife and I attended our minor league baseball team's annual Fourth of July home game in downtown Fort Wayne, a sellout as always. The stadium provides the best seats for the city's fireworks display, with their launching being carefully coordinated with the end of the baseball game. The home team TinCaps lost but that didn't

dampen the crowd's enthusiasm. There was a stirring tribute to military personnel and veterans in attendance. And, of course, nearly everyone wore red, white and blue.

People seemed to be in good moods everywhere this weekend, even those working in retail outlets. Were they extra friendly due to the holiday or was I just looking for the good in my fellow man? Either way, it's a plus for patriotism.

The number of personal fireworks displays all over town was stunning. How much money did these people spend to provide a show for their friends and neighbors? Even though a modicum of restraint would have been welcome, especially during the week leading up to the Fourth and after midnight on Independence Day proper, I would rather hear all the fireworks than face a community that just doesn't care about celebrating our independence.

One of the most divisive issues today is immigration. I have an opinion for the long-term solution to this but won't presume to offer it here. Instead, I would rather think about why these millions have risked so much to come here, whether legally or illegally. Could it be that America offers more liberty, more economic freedom, more personal safety, a higher standard of living and so forth than wherever they used to call home? Isn't this attestation of America's continuing to be that city on a hill dreamed of by the early European settlers? I can't but conclude that "these huddled masses" are indeed "yearning to breathe free" and it's the United States that best can deliver on this promise.

I'm no doctor and I didn't stay at a Holiday Inn last night but I will give a mental-health prescription anyway. Pull the plug on your cable TV even if only for one day. Don't get into any political discussions with anyone, even those with whom you know you agree. Smile at everyone you meet. Think only good thoughts about others and your own situation. Be thankful you live here and not where your immigrant ancestors did.

Maybe I just moved Thanksgiving Day into July. And maybe that holiday ought to be

celebrated monthly. It can be, and it doesn't take an act of Congress or a presidential declaration for all us to do so.

God bless America!

Father's Day

(June 22) — There is something about German father-son relationships that confuse and astound those of different heritages. That relationship appears irretrievably broken to most. Think of the historical examples of King George II and his rebellious son Frederick (George III's father). Or of Ludwig van Beethoven, who could never please his musical father. Or of King Frederick the Great, regularly beaten and even imprisoned by his unreasonable father.

Why do I bring these dysfunctional examples up on Father's Day? Because I am fully German by blood and had a similar relationship with my father. Trust me; it was not what it may have looked like from the outside. There is method to this familial madness.

It seemed I could never do anything right in my dad's eyes. Grades weren't good enough; chores were never done correctly; all my friends were "bad company." He even objected to my choice of a wife, that is until he got to know her and decided he liked her better than me.

I was the oldest so maybe I was just setting a very low bar for my siblings to surpass. I hope they realized that then and I am sure they do now. It was a price that I don't regret paying.

I also was blessed to have two grandfathers and a great-grandfather during the early years of my life. Unfortunately all three passed before I reached teenage, but each played a significant role in my development. My earliest memory is of my maternal grandfather, with whom I lived the first year or so of my life while Dad was called back into the Navy for the Korean War. The memory is one of standing at the end of my crib, waiting for Grandpa to get me up. I have no other memory of the first two years of my life except for that one.

Dad was a different grandfather than a father. My children, particularly my son, loved his Papa.

We would go to his house after church every Sunday for dinner prepared by my mom. My two youngest siblings were still at home and my kids developed a close relationship with them back then that continues to this day. We had to pack them in the car, crying, when it was time to go home. They didn't want to leave.

Eventually after Mom died and Dad was a widower, the tables were turned and he came to our house after church for Sunday dinner. At least he did until at age 90 or so and he moved into a senior retirement facility which provided a full meal plan. "I can eat there for free," he told my wife in explanation for his absence. "But I don't charge you to eat here," she responded. It was that Depression era mentality which demanded he take advantage of every meal he was paying for in his monthly rent. No matter that someone he loved might take offense. Wasting food was a mortal sin to this farm boy.

Dad's relationship with my wife was great spectator sport. She became matriarch of the family after my mother died fairly young, a rarity in a family of long-lived Germans. She was quite patient with his eccentricities . . . most of the time . . . but one exchange stands out. He must have pushed her to the limit one day as she told him: "You are acting just like your son!" She didn't mean it as a compliment for either him or me but, in retrospect, I take it as one. In the words of the Harry Chapin song "Cat's in the Cradle": "He'd grown up just like me. My boy was just like me."

So for good or bad, I am my father's son. I guess I am following in a long cultural tradition. Even Frederick the Great, who hated everything about his father, became him once he succeeded to the Prussian throne. It just runs in the blood, I guess.

I wasn't an all-American father to my children, working too many hours and leaving the day-to-day child-raising duties to my wife. I hope, though, that I instilled in them what my father did in me — love of God, country and family and the requisite duties therein. And where I fell short as a

father, I am working overtime to make good with my grandchildren . . . just like Dad did.

Happy Father's Day, Dad. You made me what I am today, and I am truly thankful for that.

Flag Day

(June 14) — June 14 is Flag Day in the United States, a holiday sandwiched between the patriotic holidays of Memorial Day and Independence Day. Unfortunately, almost no one honors it by flying flags or other appropriate decorations. It's sad, really.

My cul-de-sac has a tradition of putting out small yard flags to line the street on the major holidays. I suggested we add Flag Day to the summer big three and my neighbors agreed.

Flag Day is even more important this year than in the past. We are coming out of a pandemic which fundamentally changed our lives and may have left permanent scars on our national psyche. I am proud of my friends and neighbors for rallying together to get us all through it. I am also proud of the thousands of Americans who have tried to go about their business while honoring official and unofficial requests to keep social distance and wear masks. We are an exceptional people, in spite of what the historical deconstructionists want us to believe.

This is the kind of Americanism that our flag symbolizes. It is a symbol, sure, but one that represents ideas and ideals that come to life through this powerful symbol. What saddens me is that this symbol meant to unify has itself become divisive.

As best I can recall, flag disrespect first reared its ugly head during the Vietnam era and the highly publicized flag burnings by protestors. My generation of baby-boomers were in the forefront of these protests and we were quite successful in passing this unfortunate legacy on to subsequent generations, if scenes from our large cities are any indication. Perhaps I should blame my parents' generation, the greatest generation according to many, who did such a poor job of instilling their

values in us. But Father's Day is just around the corner so I won't take such a cheap shot.

While flag burning is not so common anymore, other disrespectful conduct has become almost commonplace. Think of all the athletes who kneel during the national anthem to show public protest of a nation that enables them to earn millions of dollars playing little boys' games. I should add this disclaimer: I have not seen any kneeling at my local minor league baseball stadium. Many of our local players each year are from Latin America. They know.

I am fortunate to have membership in the Sons of the American Legion due to my father's service in World War II and the Korean War. This organization, whose members are veterans who put their lives on the line defending the republic for which the flag stands, takes respect for the flag seriously. Each year the Legion's legislative agenda includes support for a constitutional amendment to prohibit physical desecration of the flag.

I certainly understand the intensity of the feeling that Legionnaires have for this issue. They served their country under her flag, many at great risk to themselves. Most were draftees, at least through the Vietnam era, but they don't begrudge the sacrifices they made in a noble cause. The flag is the most tangible symbol of this cause and its nobility. How can you not empathize and sympathize with this?

That said, I can't help but believe that a true love of liberty ought to allow desecration of the flag as part of our inherent freedom. Naïve as it may sound, I do believe that the silent majority of Americans take note of such behavior and ignore it. In my case at least, such disrespect strengthens my belief in the American ideal. They won't want to hear this, but even the kneelers remind me why America is the greatest nation on the planet.

I am thankful for those who act to reinforce this ideal among us, such as the small-town Wisconsin schoolteacher who initiated an unofficial flag day in his school back in 1885. It became an official holiday in 1916 by decree of President Woodrow Wilson but it was this humble

schoolteacher who should get the credit. His name, by the way, was Bernard Cigrand.

I expect my street block will be lined with flags again on June 14. Will yours?

A Summer Vacation

June 2) — I was not a road warrior during my career but I traveled enough on business to look forward to never seeing the inside of a hotel lobby or airport concourse again. My retirement goal was to sit under "my vine and fig tree," to use Biblical language. Voluntary travel ranked right behind a 20-year sentence in a Siberian salt mine on my bucket list.

Not so my wife. She spent her career as an elementary school teacher and principal. Her experience with "business travel" was to accompany a field trip of excitable children to a local museum. She couldn't wait to travel for pleasure.

Situation: Impasse. Resolution: Wife wins.

We have done a fair amount of travel in the past seven or so years since her retirement, slowed down only by Covid. We've gone to summer camp with our grandchildren, visited friends who have incomprehensibly moved away from God's country here in northeast Indiana, and even twice traveled to Europe. This past week was spent at our son-in-law's parents' house on the North Carolina Outer Banks. They live right on the Atlantic Ocean so you can guess the appeal for both grandchildren and grandma.

The beach doesn't appeal to me, although I enjoy the serenity of listening to the surf break on the sand behind (I mean, in front of) the house. It provides an excellent backdrop for reading, my favorite hobby, and even writing, such as I am doing right now.

I am one to make a virtue out of necessity so I ensure each trip involves excursions to whatever historical sites are nearby. We stopped at Harper's Ferry, a mostly rebuilt old town but at an appropriate point on the drive for a break. It was OK and at least our National Park Service senior citizen pass got us in for free.

Once in Nags Head we took the children to the local historical museum across the sound on Roanoke Island. Of course this sparked my interest in the lost colony so I immediately logged into my county library and downloaded a history of the search for those lost settlers. I'm reading it now.

What is most etched in my memory of this trip is watching the local fishermen bring in their catch. It's all by net. They placed the nets just offshore sometime overnight. About mid-morning they returned. The locals knew when this was happening and somehow even the tourists heard of it.

This is how it works: The young men in this crew of multi-generational fishermen would pull up the anchors holding the nets in place. Then a pickup truck would attach to that section of net by rope and pull it on to the beach. I didn't count how many times the truck driver did this but there had to be at least one-half mile of connected nets.

Other crew members would begin extracting the catch from the edges of the nets where they were entangled. This is not as easy as it sounds. One fisherwoman offered to teach the technique to anyone interested and they could keep some of the fish. No one volunteered.

Responding to a tourist's question, one of the fishermen said these mackerels would be sold to China. After listening to her indignation at this, a local resident informed her that the money they make from the sale would be spent right here in the Outer Banks. I didn't expect to hear a primer in David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage on the beach at Nags Head, but there you go.

The real work occurred at the end of this half-mile run of net. They trapped a school of stingrays, a non-edible fish which had to be thrown back. There were at least a hundred of these unfortunate critters, which the fishermen had to pick up by hand and toss back into the surf. This is a heavy species, so it was hard work. Most, but not all, made it. It was educational and somewhat sad to see how several of these fish

couldn't figure out how to swim through the surf back out to the ocean.

Net fishing is not something to be seen where I live. I can't imagine this working in the creek that runs behind my house. And I prefer not to know what might be caught in those stagnant waters.

However, I was reminded of the Gospel account of the disciples fishing and bringing in a bulging net. The nets I saw were a long way from bulging but there was plenty of physical labor to be had. A commercial fisherman's life is not a second career option for me. I'll leave that to Peter, Andrew, James and John.

Our Post-Pandemic Selves

(May 26) — "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold."

These haunting words of poet William Butler Yeats were written in 1919. His poem "The Second Coming" was a reflection on a world in chaos, spiraling ever downward. Think of what confronted him then: a world war that caused 14 million deaths; a bloody revolution in his Irish homeland and an even bloodier one in Bolshevik Russia; a map of Europe being redrawn in a non-recognizable way; an influenza pandemic that would claim an additional 50 million lives.

No wonder he despaired for the human race.

Are things the same now? Fortunately not in terms of deaths either due to war or pandemic but I suspect the level of despair might be similar.

My grandparents lived through World War I and the Spanish flu epidemic but I can't recall they ever mentioned it. My parents were born right after the war and their early recollections were mostly about the Great Depression. We were raised to never waste food; there were never any leftovers at our table. If something wasn't absolutely necessary, it wasn't bought. If it were purchased, careful shopping ensured that we paid the lowest price.

All this was simply the remnant of adaptive habits learned during a time of want. This way of living was not based on despair but on rural

Midwestern frugality tempered at the forge of practical experience.

I can't help but wonder what our post-pandemic lives will be like. Will we revert to a pre-pandemic lifestyle? Most people who express an opinion on this think not. It will be a "new normal," a term I dislike intensely and will never use again after this paragraph. This may be a harsh judgment on my part but it seems to me that the never-again-to-be-mentioned term represents an abject failure to acknowledge a basic human tendency to continually adapt.

So then how will we adapt? Will our better natures take charge and the most sensible changes come about? Or will we continue in a malaise of pessimism bordering on despondency?

Worse yet, unsettled times lend credibility to the extremists who offer simplistic and dangerous solutions to our problems. We have seen that over the past year or so as the very foundations of our culture and society have unraveled in the face of these well-orchestrated attacks.

"The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."

This line from Yeats' poem describes our times with eerie prescience. Who gets the headlines? Those with the most violent speech and actions in promotion of a dystopian future for us all. Where do we see a total lack of conviction to protect our common heritage? In corporate boardrooms, school classrooms, professional sports and the media—those most invested in the status quo and with the most to lose if it all comes crashing down.

Does any of this make sense?

It didn't to Yeats in 1919 nor to me in 2021.

Yeats named his poem "The Second Coming" and used Christian imagery to warn of what was to come. What makes these theological tropes interesting is that Yeats had left the church for an atheistic belief. Perhaps this can be attributed to his Church of England clergy father, who converted to Unitarianism. Doctrinal subscription was fluid in that household, to say the least.

Perhaps that's why Yeats sees this second coming not as a glorious messianic event but an apocalyptic one, brought on by a "rough beast . . . slouch[ing] toward Bethlehem." Was his fear realized in the aftermath of WWI? The Roaring Twenties was arguably the most exuberant decade of the last century but was followed by the Great Depression, World War II and the Soviet Union's enslavement of eastern Europe.

Will we greet the end of the pandemic with reckless abandon, discarding what we learned during the difficult times? Will we continue to live in fear, cynicism and despair as if the worst is yet to come? Either is a path to nowhere, at least nowhere good.

Or will we carefully reflect on what we learned, winnowing the useful from the anti-liberty and simply wrong-headed, and continue along our historical track of American progress. Will the extremists, nihilists and totalitarians in our midst let us?

We have been a resilient and optimistic people, as our history shows. Here's hoping we still are. ♦

Backgrounders

Richard McGowan, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, has taught philosophy and ethics cores for more than 40 years, most recently at Butler University, and is a baseball fan of the first water.



Diversity? Plato Has a Few Questions

(Aug. 24) — Plato's dialogue, "Meno," begins abruptly. Meno asks Socrates, "Can ethics be taught?"

I followed Plato's approach. On the first day of class, I asked my students, "Can ethics be taught?" They wrote that "Ethics and moral standards depend on the individual and their upbringing," "Morals are not absolute in that they change from culture to culture and over the course of time," "What one person deems ethical, another may think is unethical," "Ethics can differ from one group of people to another," and "One person's set of ethics may differ from another's and we can never really say who is right or wrong."

Of 100 students, 75 of 85 presented some variation of those responses. So much for diversity.

I will not address the wisdom of those students who wrote "ethics cannot be taught" and submitted it to the person who had the responsibility of teaching the required ethics course. I will address the problem the student responses demonstrated, namely, relativism.

The student who wrote, "Ethics and moral standards depend on the individual," captured the position known as ethical subjectivism. In Plato's day, Protagoras, the great sophist, said something similar: "Man is the measure of all things." The claim that morals "change from culture to culture" presents the position of cultural relativism, that right and wrong depend on the culture or society. Plato, who lived under the Thirty Tyrants, witnessed first-hand how cultural relativism works out when his teacher, Socrates, was put to

death. Plato thought a floor of universal moral standards exists.

If my students' responses were any indicator, this is an age of relativism; and my claim does not depend on what "is" is. Too often I have observed that some notion of diversity is used to defend a cultural practice: "It's not wrong; it's just different," as though women being raped in some culture's backwater is defensible.

That's the kind of thing I heard from my students. But looking at the responses to the question of ethics being taught, the responses show patterns, clear patterns. The patterns are shared by many people, as researchers such as Lawrence Kohlberg and William Perry have observed. The social sciences could not work unless people were predictable, though not invariable.

I asked my students who their heroes were. The most common answer? Around 90 percent said "Mom" or "Dad" or "my parents." So much for diversity.

I asked why they were heroes; The students listed virtues — caring, giving, faithful, courageous, honest and so on. After one class named the virtues, I'd cover their responses. The next class went through the same exercise. They listed the same virtues. Some might say that the virtues are cultural to Americans. If my foreign students are any indication, cultures all over the world value and identify the same virtues. One class now knows of Prince Faud, from the royal family, who defended Kuwait from Iraqi invaders. Naser al-Mutairi told us "He did not have to take arms. He was from the royal family but he showed courage and died in battle."

Every society needs and has people who show courage, taking risks on behalf of the good. Virtues are universal. So much for diversity.

All societies have laws and, remarkably, many are similar. I asked my Korean students, "Is murder illegal in Korea." He looked at me as though I'd grown a second head. "Of course." Turns out, murder is illegal in every society where my foreign students lived. Note: stealing is illegal, too.

That is not surprising given that the Golden Rule can be found in all the major cultures and their derivative cultures. I drove home this lesson by reading variations of the Golden Rule and asking students to identify the source. One source states, “Regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain and regard your neighbor’s loss as your own loss” and another states “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” One states that “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others” and another says “As you deem yourself, so deem others.” One source states that “None of you truly have faith if you do not desire for your brother that which you desire for yourself” and another says “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.” The sources (Taoism, Christianity, Confucianism, Sikhism, the Quran and the Talmud, respectively) suggest that cultures have the same broad moral injunction.

And what if ethics and morals are not thought to be universal? J.K. Rowling provided the answer 25 years ago. In the climactic chapter of the first Harry Potter book, “Professor Quirrell,” a stand-in for Voldemort says to Harry, “There is no good or evil, there is only power.” The Nazis had power, too. How did that turn out? In an age of relativism, nihilism appears defensible.

It is not.

The Egalitarian Campus

“Diversity is a central component of our academic mission at Indiana University Bloomington; our teaching, learning, scholarship, research and creativity are immeasurably enriched by students, faculty and staff with diverse experiences.” — First sentence, IU Bloomington’s Statement on Diversity from Bloomington Faculty Council

(Aug. 3) — For the last dozen or so years before retiring from Butler, I asked my students what word they heard more often than any other on campus. Consistently, the students responded with “diversity.” The students were on target then

— and prescient to boot. The other day, the Butler business school sent out a notice, to wit:

“Dr. Brandy Mmbaga has accepted the role of Faculty Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). You may recall that Provost Barnett announced the creation and funding of these roles, one in each college, in May.”

The recipients of the notice were presumed to know what “diversity,” “inclusion” and “equity” meant. The school’s citizens, including its policymakers, were also presumed to value each of the concepts. They apparently also were resigned to the possibility that religious conviction is not similarly valued in DEI.

Of the approximately 325 faculty members, 25 to 30 percent held a graduate degree from a Big Ten school. The percentage is high considering the number of Ph.D.-granting institutions in the United States, let alone the world. A legitimate conclusion to draw from the data is that Butler could have been more diverse. I spoke to a dean about the huge imbalance favoring Big Ten Ph.D. holders but only three Catholic school Ph.D.s on the faculty. He said something like, “Well, there are a lot of Big Ten schools in the Midwest, where Butler is located.”

For the record, Notre Dame, Marquette, St. Louis University, Loyola University, the University of Dayton, Creighton University and the University of Detroit Mercy have at least six doctoral programs at their institution. All are Catholic schools, all are in the Midwest.

I offer the Butler data because Indiana’s schools of higher education show the same lack of diversity. Anyone can look at a college’s bulletin and find information about faculty members’ rank and degree.

Bulletins normally list a faculty member’s educational “pedigree.” My Butler entry read, “Richard McGowan, Instructor, B.A., Colgate 1971; M.A., Washington State University, 1976; Ph.D., Marquette University, 1985.”

The 2017-2018 college bulletin for IPFW (now PFW and IUFW) shows that 42 faculty members earned their last graduate degree from Indiana

University or IUPUI and that another 30 earned a graduate degree from Purdue University. As well, an additional 62 faculty members held a Ph.D. from a Big Ten school for a total of 134 Big Ten-educated faculty members. A total of nine faculty members held a Catholic school Ph.D. and one faculty member had a degree from Brandeis University, a school aligned with Jewish tradition. So much for diversity at the old IPFW.

Examining the IUPUI faculty list was more difficult because many faculty members chose not to reveal their educational pedigree. Nonetheless, scrolling through the list of faculty in the School of Liberal Arts for educational background revealed the same sort of pattern. Of the faculty members who provided their educational history, 35 graduate degrees were from an Indiana University school, either IU or IUPUI. Another 10 faculty members listed a Purdue degree and an additional 26 graduate degrees came from other Big Ten schools. It is worth noting that the faculty has 11 Ball State graduates.

One faculty member held a Ph.D. from the Catholic University of Louvain, another earned a Ph.D. at Loyola University and a third received a Ph.D. from Fordham University, all Catholic schools. In other words, Ball State provided more than three times the amount of faculty members from Catholic schools.

The situation at Indiana schools of higher education is problematic for at least two reasons. First, it is obvious that the schools could offer more diverse perspectives to students. Given the rhetoric out of educational leaders about diversity, the schools should offer more diverse perspectives to the students. Second, the criticism of ‘legacies,’ i.e., those students who have an advantage in admissions because their parents or other relatives attended the school, appears misplaced. The amount of the Big Ten graduate degrees held by IU faculty suggests that legacies are a good thing. For the record: I think legacies do have a leg up if their relatives attended the school. They are more likely to do well and finish because their relatives “know the ropes,” as the popular expression would have it.

Faculty members from similarly situated schools will also “know the ropes.” However, it is a bit hypocritical to hire faculty members with connections to Big Ten schools and then criticize the same practice by undergraduate admittees.

Of course, the biggest problem may be bias by IU schools against those who earned a graduate degree from a religiously affiliated school. But, apparently, some adverse bias is okay, diversity be damned.

Mandating the Vaccine

Steven Keltner, PA, has practiced in one of Indiana’s medically underserved and busiest emergency departments for 20 years. He also served ten years as an adjunct faculty member in the Health Sciences Department at one of Indiana’s premier private universities, as well as serving twelve years on its Board of Visitors.



(June 12) — Chances are, you’ve changed a test answer at the last second, only to find out your original response was correct. Second-guessing your visceral response is a common occurrence.

Professional test preparation companies generally offer a key piece of advice to deal with this situation: Never change an answer, unless you’re sure you made a mistake or uncover new information that was not considered in your original response.

Fortunately, the consequences of this common mistake are usually not too steep when it’s a school examination or a standardized test. But making this mistake in the business world can have far-reaching consequences.

Take, for example the emerging question: Can a private company mandate Covid vaccination for its employees?

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and based on previous experience with mandating influenza vaccines, the answer would appear to be “yes.” As long as employers follow the American Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines issued for previously mandated vaccines and allow exemptions for people who are pregnant, allergic

to a component of the vaccine or object to the vaccine for religious purposes, mandating Covid vaccines seems reasonable.

Here's the new information not considered in the original response:

The guidance of the EEOC is limited in perspective and focuses on assuring the vaccinations are given in accordance with the ADA and other civil rights laws. Appropriately, the EEOC does not, and should not, consider other laws which lie outside its scope of review. As it turns out, Congress created such a law almost twenty years ago.

After the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Congress identified the need to rapidly respond to potential bio-terrorist attacks in the future. Clearly, the lengthy "formal" approval process used by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to authorize drugs was impractical in such a situation. Therefore, Congress created the streamlined Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) process under Section 564 of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (FDCA).

Because new drugs or devices approved under this process are not fully vetted for efficacy and long-term safety, Section 564 placed conditions on all drugs or devices administered to a recipient under EUA approval. In short, Congress protected potential recipients by including a "right of refusal" requirement with only one exception. Specifically, members of the military do not have the "right of refusal" if the U.S. President determines the requirement is not in the best interest of national security (10 U.S.C. § 1107a). Interestingly, no such presidential determination has been made to date with respect to Covid vaccinations.

The truth is, mandating ordinary vaccinations authorized under the FDA's formal approval process has been deemed legally acceptable if EEOC standards are met. However, authors of the article titled "Federal Government Says Employers Can Mandate Covid Vaccines? Not So Fast," point out that mandating vaccinations authorized using EUA standards (rather than the

formal process), could be a violation of laws set forth by the FDCA Section 564(e)(1)(A)(ii)(III).

There are currently a handful of lawsuits regarding mandatory Covid vaccinations for employees. Companies who have decided to adopt this position should carefully reconsider their stance. Terminating employees for non-compliance could lead to expensive class-action litigation and deliver a crushing blow to company morale that would surely follow such action.

So, if your company is considering such a mandate, it might be prudent to offer the following options to the board of directors:

Should we:

- Push the mandate regardless of the risk to the company
- Continue to simply encourage vaccinations
- Neither 1 nor 2
- All of the above
- Now that we have all the information, choose the most appropriate response . . .
- Go with our gut.

The Pandemic

(May 22) — It's peculiar how a misconception can dramatically alter the way facts are perceived. Virtually every child growing up in America believes, "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" and discovered America. The fact is, Norse explorers set foot on the continent approximately 500 years earlier with help of explorer Leif Erikson.

Recently, America has fallen prey to a similar misconception. The first "official" case of CoVID-19 in the United States was confirmed on January 21, 2020. But CoVID-19 actually arrived months earlier. Authors of a study published in *Clinical Infectious Disease* (<https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciaa1785>) tested samples of blood donated to the American Red Cross between December 13, 2019 – January 19, 2020. Their findings showed positive antibodies for CoVID-19 in 1.43 percent of the samples they tested. This would be impossible if the first case of CoVID-19 arrived on Jan. 21, 2020.

The only way antibodies could be found in these sample is if people contracted the disease before donating blood. Since CoVID-19 antibodies develop in roughly 1-3 weeks, it is reasonable to presume CoVID-19 was in the United States by November 2019 (or earlier). Therefore, by the time the CDC confirmed its first case, CoVID-19 had actually infected millions of Americans.

Determining the exact number of people infected before January 21, 2020 would be impossible. Blood donation does not accurately represent the general population for many reasons. For example, people under the age of 17 are not allowed to donate blood. Minorities and people in lower socio-economic groups tend to donate blood at a lower rate. However, using the published infection rate of 1.43 percent would indicate approximately 4.7 million people had been infected at the time the CDC reporting America's first case.

This means the virus was actively spreading for months before government officials suggested lock-downs or a mask mandate. In that time, Americans traveled extensively to celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, birthdays, anniversaries, and the 2020 new year. Everyone remained at work. Children and teachers remained in school, health clubs remained open, and sporting events were attended without fear. On February 2, 2020, roughly 62,000 spectators packed into one stadium to watch Super Bowl LIX, and millions of people attended Super Bowl parties. All of these activities occurred without social distancing or masking.

Prior to the arrival of the first "official" case, the CDC did not identify a perceptible spike in mortality in any portion of the population to reasonably justify lock-downs or other measures. America went on about its business and kept passing along the virus—quietly working toward herd immunity.

The scientific community mistakenly tracked and contact-traced emerging cases from their incorrectly identified index (first) case which they

"discovered" on January 21, 2020. This dramatically altered the way facts were gathered. Health officials were left marveling at the speed with which the virus spread into what they believed was a completely "virgin" population. The virus appeared to be "popping up" everywhere. But in reality, CoVID-19 was simply spreading from the 4.7 million people already infected with the virus. This mistaken identification led health officials to grossly miscalculate the speed of transmission and virility of CoVID-19 and the need for their containment measures.

CoVID-19 really became a problem when the American public "discovered" it. Watching daily death tolls and tracing the spread of the virus across the nation became an obsessive compulsion. Media outlets experienced high ratings and increased profits while feeding the disorder, picking and choosing the opinions that drove their ratings, while ignoring or discrediting anyone who might quell their stranglehold on the American fear factor.

But, since the very beginning of the pandemic there have been medical professionals urging a measured and methodical approach to the pandemic. The path they outlined was based on decades of virology and epidemiology practice and data. Against their advice, and bending to growing public opinion, America was forced into sequestration. The pandemic was well under way, and under control before public opinion trumped medical science.

Although a majority of Americans believe Columbus discovered America, it doesn't mean it's true. Fortunately, this misconception has had little impact on the nation. Likewise, an overwhelming majority of Americans believe CoVID-19 arrived on Jan. 21, 2020. This misconception however, has had a major impact on our nation. Therefore, it's time to set the record straight...

Because of inaccurately gathered data, America suffers from a terrible misconception regarding CoVID-19 that has altered the way the facts have been presented and perceived. There is clear

evidence that CoVID-19 was entrenched in the United States prior to reports of its official arrival. There was no evidence to suggest that the months prior to January 21, 2020 were rife with deaths due to CoVID-19. With this in mind, it is apparent that our now heavily vaccinated and naturally immune population, can safely return to its pre-CoVID-19 lifestyle.

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Hamas Jihadists Can Count on U.S. Media

“We are shocked and horrified that the Israeli military would target and destroy the building housing AP’s bureau and other news organizations in Gaza.” — AP President Gary Pruitt, May 16, 2021

(May 17) — On May 14 2018, the 70th anniversary of the birth of the state of Israel, a modern day miracle, the U.S. under President Donald Trump, fulfilled a promise made by Congress in the 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act, passed by a 95-3 vote in the Senate to move our embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people. That bill unfortunately came with a Presidential waiver, and every president since including Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Hussein Obama promised to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem but failed to do so. Only one, Donald Trump, a modern-day Cyrus and eternal friend of Israel and the Jewish people, kept his promise.

Simultaneously, 45 miles away from the festivities in Jerusalem, at the Gaza border with Israel, the so-called “March of Return,” an annual event inaugurated in 1998 by arch-terrorist Yassir Arafat, had been going on for weeks and culminated on May 14. It commemorated what the Palestinians call the “Nakba” or “Catastrophe,”

their self-pitying reference to Israel Independence Day. Fifty thousand Palestinians, most of them Hamas terrorists, attempted to breach the border with Israel, for the purpose of killing or kidnapping Jews in neighboring Israeli villages. Women and children, the “human shields” for which Hamas is famous, accompanied the marchers to maximize civilian casualties for the compliant press.

The peaceful Marchers, as instructed, brought guns, knives, pipe bombs and grenades and hid them under their clothing. They also brought fire-kites to inflict damage on Israeli fields and crops. More than 60 of the invading Palestinian terrorists were killed at the border, dutifully reported with glaring split screen images of the chaos in Gaza and the events in Jerusalem, designed to tarnish the embassy event, President Trump and Israel.

Israel abandoned Gaza in 2005, every Jew dead or alive, including those buried, were evacuated. Israel left behind elaborate greenhouse and other infrastructure and synagogues, all which were destroyed in scenes reminiscent of Kristallnacht. In 2006, Palestinians in Gaza voted in Hamas over the Palestinian Authority. In June of 2007, Hamas launched their military takeover of Gaza, killing hundreds of their Muslim brothers in the Palestinian Authority by dragging them through the streets chained to cars, throwing them off roofs or shooting them in the head in front of their wives and children.

Hamas is a terrorist organization, recognized as such by the U.S. and the European Union. They call openly for the destruction of the state of Israel and do not recognize the right of Israel to exist within any borders. They are the Palestinian offshoot of the Muslim brotherhood and as such do not seek only the destruction of Israel but all of Christendom and Western civilization including the U.S., and the establishment of a global caliphate. Since taking over Gaza, they have done nothing to help their citizens build the institutions of a civil society, to promote normal democratic discourse, or to develop a free market economy,

preferring instead welfare dependency based on international aid. In the process, they have inflicted great suffering on their citizens, running what is in effect an open-air prison state for 2 million people. There is high unemployment and poverty, poor sanitation, and inadequate healthcare. Gaza, with its proximity to Israel's high-tech economy, ports, trade, beaches and tourism, and a willingness by the nations of the world, business interests and aid-organizations to help them develop their private sector, should have been Singapore on the Mediterranean. Instead it is Afghanistan. Israel blockades Gaza because Hamas is an Iranian backed terrorist organization that engages in acts of terror. They use their assets and plentiful aid to build tunnels, fire missiles at Israeli civilians, and breach borders with armies of armed terrorists to kill, main, and kidnap. Egypt blockades them for the same reason.

Israel is a first-world nation that provides for its citizens the highest standard of living in the Middle East, equivalent to that of Western Europe. It is an open democracy governed consensually by the rule of law, with human rights, free speech, religious freedom, a free press and a world-class free market economy. It boasts the best hospital, universities, museums and symphonies in the world, and leads the planet in any number of cutting edge technologies. Its more than one million Israeli-Arab citizens are the freest Muslims in the Middle East. None are interested in joining their Muslim brethren under the benighted Palestinian Authority or Hamas, preferring instead to keep their citizenship in the Jewish State – for good reason.

Hamas, on the other hand, like its secular terrorist counterpart in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), the Palestinian Authority (PA), are corrupt, kleptocratic, genocidal extremists. Of all the nationalist movements around the world, the Palestinians, Hamas or the PA, are the least deserving of a state – and should not be given one. The world scarcely needs another dysfunctional, terrorist regime. There is no difference between

either of them and ISIS or Al-Qaeda except that for “intersectional” and anti-Semitic purposes, they enjoy good press from a left-dominated media — as long as it is Jews engaging them.

The Assad regime, for example, in the ongoing Syrian Civil War, have killed thousands of Palestinians in the Yarmouk Refugee Camp in Damascus, the largest Palestinian refugee community in Syria, transforming it into a “death camp,” engaging in wanton acts of barbarity far worse than anything Israel has ever committed. But you never heard about this because it involved Arabs killing Arabs – not Jews, and therefore of no interest to the Left.

There is one card the Palestinian Jihadists know they can always play. That is the support and positive spin of their egregious behavior by the international left including the media, the EU, UN, the U.S. Democrat Party and many liberal-leftist American Jews and their various anti-Zionist organizations (J-Street, Jewish Voice For Peace and many others).

They will discredit the Israelis, delegitimize them, hold them to an impossible double standard, and continually advance the Hamas narrative of brutal IDF soldiers cutting down innocent, defenseless Palestinian Muslims — despite Israel having the most moral and honorable military in the world, one that goes well beyond any other fighting force to protect innocent life, often at huge costs to its own soldiers.

The media and their political functionaries thus create and perpetuate the crisis. By supporting the Jihadist narrative, they encourage more of the same and avoid putting pressure on Palestinians to create a functioning, viable state. The media and the rest of the anti-Israel cabal can be relied on to defend genocidal Islamic terrorists.

Hamas sees dead Palestinians as a photo-op. No media, no dead Palestinians. Yes, our media and their leftist allies have blood on their hands, rivers of blood, most of it Palestinian. It is they, not Israel, who prolong the agony, suffering, and death. ♦

The Bookshelf

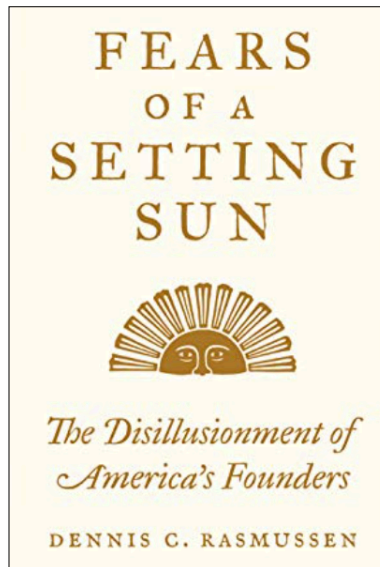
Fears of a Setting Sun

There seems to be no end to newly released histories of the Founding Fathers and their era. One must show careful discrimination in choosing which ones to read or it becomes overwhelming. One heuristic I use is the reputation of and my prior experience with the author.

When Dennis C. Rasmussen released “Fears of a Setting Sun: The Disillusionment of America’s Founders” (Princeton University Press 2021, 232 pages plus notes, \$99 hardcover), I put it on my reading list since he is an author I like. Or so I thought. After checking my log of books read, a log of nearly 5,000 books since I started keeping it in 1990, he wasn’t there. No matter; this book was worth the read.

Rasmussen’s premise is that nearly all the major founders, Madison being the notable exception, despaired at life’s end of where their radical experiment in republican government was headed. Most thought they had failed to establish a lasting structure. Each had a different, even contradictory, reason for pessimism, but perhaps it was this wide range of putative weaknesses that proved to be the strength of our form of government over two and one-half centuries.

Rasmussen starts, appropriately, with George Washington and compares his military record, one in which he lost nearly every battle but won the war, with his political one, which saw victory in every battle but ultimately defeat in the war . . . the war here being a unified and virtuous nation. Washington’s attempt to rein in the rank partisanship that marked his second term was beset by failure, leading Washington to eventually choose sides when he fervently wanted to be above all that.



Washington’s Farewell Address illustrates his bitterness at this failure. Rasmussen points out that its dominant theme is the dangers of partisanship, a contemporary term for the extremes of a party system. We remember the address for its warning against “foreign entanglements,” a term actually coined by Thomas Jefferson in his first inaugural address. Look again, advises Rasmussen, to see what was foremost on

Washington’s mind as he was

leaving public office for the last time. In Washington’s mind, his failure to prevent this factionalism was also the nation’s failure.

Alexander Hamilton gets balanced treatment from Rasmussen, the balancing being among his dedication to the Constitution, his belief that the federal government needed the authority to effectively carry out its assigned duties and his own intellectual brilliance in considering problems. What set Hamilton apart from the others was his immigrant status, anchoring him as a son of no particular state. His jaundiced view of states’ rights arguments flowed from this lack of multi-generational loyalty to a colony or state. His experience as an aide to Washington in the War of Independence solidified his contempt for an Articles-of-Confederation type of central government, one with no power to accomplish anything. Rasmussen credits him with doing more to create the new government than any of the others but recognizes Hamilton’s influence all came through Washington. He remained a Washington aide-de-camp to the end.

Hamilton was a flawed genius, as were they all, and Rasmussen criticizes him for this over-weening ambition to be a military hero during the quasi-war with France and especially for his published attack on John Adams during the 1800 presidential campaign. By splitting the Federalist Party, Hamilton may have ensured the election of

his archenemy Thomas Jefferson in the author's opinion. Think of the Bush-Romney "never Trump" statements in the last two elections and you can get a feel for the electoral disaster Hamilton perpetrated on his own party.

Thomas Jefferson's disillusion with America's future may have been based in his own deteriorating health combined with financial insolvency but it was driven more by Virginia's failing tobacco economy and its visible descent into the backwaters of national politics. Jefferson's Eden was disappearing, assuming it ever really existed other than in his strident, small farmer, democratic ideology.

There is the obligatory chapter on slavery as America's "original sin," a misuse of a precise theological term but currently in vogue. Rasmussen uses Jefferson's correspondence to give insight into his personal struggle with a problem even his genius could not solve.

It is an interesting insight into a tortured and tortuous rationalizing process taking place in Jefferson's mind where an ethical problem hits political and economic reality head-on. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 serves as the backdrop for Jefferson's, and Rasmussen's, musings.

Jefferson's primary objection to the direction the new nation was taking lay with the role of the Supreme Court. He could not reconcile himself to its co-equal status especially as his cousin John Marshall applied it. Many today, both right and left, fall into this fallacy in that they want the Court to rule as they see fit and not as the Constitution demands.

The book concludes with James Madison, the only optimist in the group. He never lost the faith, but then the application of his overarching principles could be quite nimble as the situation required. The irony with Madison is that he was at his most pessimistic in the nation's first years but grew increasingly optimistic through time.

Charter Schools and Their Enemies

Thomas Sowell

This quote from John Adams, reflecting on his involvement in America's founding, best summarizes Rasmussen's thesis:

"Did not the American Revolution produce the French Revolution? [A]nd did not the French Revolution produce all the Calamities, and Desolations to the human Race and the whole Globe ever Since? I meant well however."

Just remember, Adams was an old grump.

Recommendation: I just can't buy

Rasmussen's primary thesis but the book is an interesting read for the manner in which he gives us insight into how several Founders worried about the permanency of their experiment.

Charter Schools and Their Enemies

A new biography of Thomas Sowell prompted me to look at his writings to see what I may have missed. What caught my eye was "Charter Schools and Their Enemies" (Hachette Book Group 2020, 276 pages with extensive notes and data tables, \$22 hardcover). Mostly I have read Sowell's economic writings so I thought it would be worth the time to read his take on charter schools.

In the interest of full disclosure, my educational background is with Lutheran schools so I don't know much about charters other than recognizing them for the lightning rods they seem to be. One must also keep in mind that they are public schools in that they are funded by state tax dollars but administered outside the usual school district oversight and teacher union rules. Lightning rods indeed.

What made Sowell's book so useful to a layman like me is that he wrote it as a research report, which means it is data intensive under careful research controls. He selected a set of traditional public and charter schools for his study based on rigorously applied criteria. For instance his selected schools were only those in New York City that were majority-minority and with both traditional and charter schools housed in the

same building so that physical facilities differences would not distort the data. He studied New York's standardized math and English test scores across third through eighth grade for these students to determine what percent in each category reached the state proficiency threshold. I'm not a Ph.D. but that sounds about as close to apples-to-apples as you can get.

Sowell certainly knew how the results of his study would be received by the education establishment so he took great pains to validate his research methodology. The book is an excellently documented report of his in-depth study of New York City charter schools and their performance over against traditional public schools based on state standardized testing. While done as an academic study, the book is written with a general audience in mind. In other words don't be frightened by all the data.

The results? Charter school students achieved proficiency at a factor of five to one in English and seven to one in math over their traditional public school peers. If that doesn't get your attention, then consider this from the Wall Street Journal: Black and Hispanic students in these charter schools showed higher proficiency rates than white students statewide.

So why does the political establishment in New York City expend so much time and money in opposition to these clearly successful schools? It's partly personal between Bill De Blasio and Eva Maskowitz, one charter school operator, going back to their days together on the New York City Council. But only partly. Follow the money, if I may paraphrase Sowell. He points out that if every NYC child on the charter school waiting list were able to enroll, it would involve a transfer of \$1 billion from the public school budget. Now we're talking real money, as Senator Everitt Dirksen was fond of saying.

The same political battle is occurring across the nation and public school boards, teacher unions and Democrat politicians do their best (or worst) to stymie charter schools, often in the face of state law requiring cooperation in such things

as providing surplus building space to charters. Reading Sowell's book should provoke outrage in anyone who cares about our children. The data is clear and can't be gainsaid; still too many professional educators gleefully sacrifice the educational attainment of under-privileged children on the altar of self-aggrandizement. It's crony capitalism in the public sector.

Sowell takes on the "no accountability" straw man against charter schools by simply differentiating input accountability such as hundreds of pages of negotiated work rules over against output accountability such as test success. He makes a mockery of input accountability in the New York City public schools which requires teachers charged with incompetency or misconduct be kept in a "rubber room" under supervision of security guards while still drawing full pay and benefits. There were 600 of these in 2009 plus another 1,000 in an "absent teacher reserve" because no principal would allow them in his building. Again, at full pay and benefits and not subject to termination due to the union contract. He provides similar examples from other major cities but you get the point. Charter school teachers either perform, and get rewarded appropriately, or are terminated. That is accountability to my blue-collar way of thinking.

Sowell concludes his book with an overview of the dangers lurking ahead for charter schools. Simply put, school boards and teacher unions see the proven academic success of charter schools as an existential threat. External restrictions generally include limitations on the number of charter schools and refusal to provide unused space in violation of state laws. Internal restrictions include requiring ideological instruction at the expense of educational benefits and overriding charter school disciplinary policies. Much of the organized political effort to thwart charter schools resides in California and New York City. No surprise there.

The tragedy of the charter school debate in Sowell's opinion is that it focuses on adult priorities such as political power and budgetary

allocations. When does anyone ask what is best for the children? Hardly ever, in Sowell's analysis. In fact the progressive establishment's efforts to disestablish charter schools is a war on poverty-stricken children even though Sowell never uses that term. The assaults continue as this past summer Democrats on the House Appropriations Committee cut federal funding for charter schools while increasing overall educational funding by 40 percent. And in case charter schools didn't get the point, the committee also added a provision that prohibits charter schools from contracting with any for-profit entity or lose eligibility for federal assistance. Note that traditional public schools may still do so, just not charter public schools.

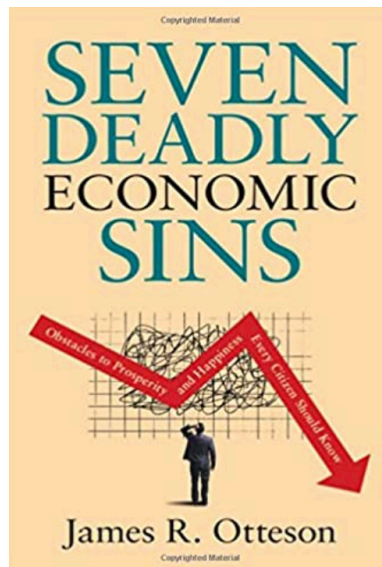
The children really don't matter in the high stakes game of federal funding. Perhaps this realization prompted Sowell's book dedication: "To those children whose futures we hold in the balance."

Recommendation: There's no use in asking anti-charter agitators to read this book; they won't be persuaded by clear data. Everyone else will.

Seven Deadly Economic Sins

I am Lutheran, not Roman Catholic, but I do know the seven deadly sins as decreed by the medieval church — pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth. I was never sure whether you picked your favorite — mine would be sloth — or more likely were guilty of all.

It is only right that a Notre Dame professor should update the list with a focus on the abject economic illiteracy in our nation. James R. Otteson, professor of business ethics, has pulled together his own list of economic fallacies widely held by policymakers and the average citizen on the street. "Seven Deadly Economic Sins: Obstacles to Prosperity and Happiness Every Citizen Should Know" (Cambridge University



Press 2021, 305 pages including notes, \$25 hardcover) is his effort to combat this ignorance by addressing seven egregious economic fallacies that work against prosperity.

I will say up front that I found the book rather boring but only because I majored in economics at the undergraduate level so I should not be prone to fall into any of these fallacies. However, I would unscientifically guess that

99 percent of the population probably believes most if not all them. They are Otteson's audience and he has addressed them with just the right combination of simple prose and everyday life illustrations.

Otteson introduces the book by providing a layman's definition of several critical economic principles, most importantly that of opportunity cost. He provides brief quotes from economic giants such as Adam Smith and Friedrich Hayek, who called all non-economists "second hand dealers in ideas." Quotes from Smith are used to head each chapter so one can get a good introduction to Smith's theories without reading several thousand pages of his actual writing.

I generally avoid taking a pedestrian approach to a book review. By that I mean walking the reader through the book, chapter by chapter and in order, but here I make an exception. It's really the only way to fully appreciate Otteson's devastating destruction of what we believe about how things work.

The first chapter hits the redistributionists right where they live. Wealth is not a zero-sum game, at least not since about 1800, largely due to the dominance of liberal democracy and free market economies in the west. Since then wealth has been created and shared across entire populations, including the bottom 90 percent. He

also addresses the concept of equal moral agency and the labor theory of value in easy-to-understand terms.

Opportunity cost is the theme of chapter two. He makes a trenchant argument that it is government officials who least understand opportunity or unseen costs of their decisions to the detriment of us all. He also explains the broken window fallacy, the belief that even vandalism can create economic activity through its cleanup. I particularly like his discussion of Adam Smith's three P's — person, property and promise — as the foundation of free market activity.

The third chapter addresses the fallacy that there are great minds who know better than all the rest of us. He tears this one down by differentiating between general knowledge, which many of the elite can legitimately claim, and specific knowledge which can only be held by those individuals personally affected. "Don't worry—you'll thank us later" sums up this kind of government hubris quite well, I would say.

In his fourth chapter on progress, he begins by explaining equal moral agency for all individuals and how the last two hundred years have seen general acceptance of this principle. In other words people should be free to choose, to borrow a phrase used by Milton and Rose Friedman as a book title. Central planners, whom Otteson deprecatingly calls the Great Minds, just can't know what you or I really want. Progress is not inevitable, as this chapter's title instructs us. It is due to a classical liberal view of mankind and society that has served the free world so well, but none of this is preordained. Political and economic systems must be established to promote and safeguard liberty.

The fifth chapter focuses on the argument that economic analysis is not immoral or amoral. Otteson takes on the "people, not profits" mantra chanted all too frequently by progressives. This fallacy ignores the fact that it inevitably leads to favoring one group over another. He praises profit as producing net value increases for both parties

in a transaction...so long as they can freely choose. He also makes the point that free markets help build trust among people who know nothing about each other but freely engage in mutually beneficial activity.

The penultimate chapter focuses on spurious arguments for equality. Equality of what? Otteson maintains that any scale of equality comes at the expense of others, making them less equal. It is our unequalness, our diversity if you will, that makes us prosperous. There are only four ways to create equality, what have been called the Four Horsemen: warfare, revolution, state collapse and pandemic. Think of the many communist nations over the past century; all failed abjectly at great cost in lives and without producing a paradise of any kind. Only equality of moral agency in which everyone has equal control of his own choices is worth pursuing. This requires respecting other people's opinions even when we disagree with them. Tell that to the cancel culture mob.

Otteson concludes with a discussion of how and why markets are not perfect. He addresses it along three phenomena: collective action, inequality and exploitation. A brief word on each in turn. The collective action discussion includes a discussion of Hardin's tragedy of the commons using the example of cattlemen sharing common grazing land. This is not dissimilar to the British enclosure controversy of the early modern era. He manages to explain without using the term "property rights," which I found unusual if not disingenuous. Otteson's discussion of inequality is simply a redux of his earlier chapter but summarized quite well. Regarding exploitation, he talks about so-called "price gouging" during hurricanes but falls back on Hayek and his explanation of a rational economic order based on the price mechanism. I would restate his conclusion as a warning against making perfect the enemy of good.

I know that I have failed to do justice to this book, in large part due its comprehensiveness in explaining what I see as simple economic principles. Nothing in this book should come as a

surprise to anyone who gives any thought to how and why people make economic decisions. That's the problem; so few people do that. Just think back to the last discussion you had with others, even those of like mind. It's all 30 second sound bites and one-upmanship. And I'm talking about our friends.

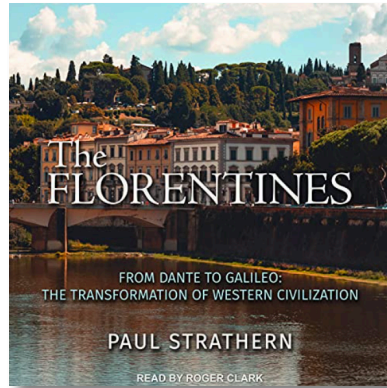
In his summary chapter Otteson briefly touches on the issue of privacy, which he defines as a space "in which we live unmolested, free from the unwanted intrusion of others." He quotes Virginia Woolf who called this "a room of one's own." This brings up an important strength of the book; Otteson frequently references studies done by others and quotes some of the greatest economic thinkers such as Smith and Hayek.

He ends with a reiteration of his moral philosophy of equal moral agency, not an economic principle but one that fits comfortably within the free market space. Most people either can't or won't think of economics as an explanation of how humans can and should interact within this space. Otteson is writing for them. That is why this book is so important today.

Recommendation: Economics book written by a non-economist for the economically illiterate. Should be required reading on college campuses by professors and students and in the halls of Congress.

In Search of a Kingdom

Sometimes, to my irritation, a book does not deliver on its title or at least what I read into its title. "In Search of a Kingdom: Francis Drake, Elizabeth I, and the Perilous Birth of the British Empire" by Laurence Bergreen (Custom House 2021, 397 pages plus notes, \$24 hardcover) is one such book. I was hoping for a strategic look at the Spanish-English rivalry within Europe and in the New World. This is covered but as a backdrop for the main story — that of Francis Drake the pirate.



A pirate he was, Bergreen makes clear. Drake sailed for queen and country but only so long as it offered him the opportunity to get rich. He certainly was successful at that, achieving his wealth at the expense of Philip II and the Spanish public fisc.

Bergreen does provide adequate historical setting for why Drake

did what he did. England was an impoverished nation of no international significance while Spain was ruler of the Americas and boasted the Habsburgs as its royal family. Then there was the Roman Catholic-Protestant religious divide.

The first two-thirds of the book covers in great detail Drake's circumnavigation of the globe in 1580 in replication of Ferdinand Magellan's earlier feat for Spain. Sure, Drake wanted the prestige but what he really wanted was to steal as much Spanish New World gold and silver as he could capture. In this he assured his sailors he had the blessing of Queen Elizabeth, who understandably never put her approval in writing. Drake sailed on a wink and a nod. In later times his status would have been as a privateer, a legalized form of piracy during war.

Francis Drake the man was a study in contradictions, at least for his time. Bergreen details Drake's kindly and respectful interactions with native people on the coasts of each continent he touched. He was a deeply religious man, leading his crew in regular prayers. He executed a gentleman along on the journey for fomenting mutiny but only after a formal trial and after offering the mutineer three options for sentence. He had a temper but was kind-hearted toward his men...most of the time.

Bergreen's Drake is put forward as the single most important instrument in England's achievement of parity with Spain. He brought back so much stolen treasure that his exploits were kept secret at the pain of death so that Elizabeth could claim plausible deniability when confronted by the Spanish ambassador. It was

Philip's rage against Drake's deprivations that ultimately pushed him into the disastrous decision to launch the ill-fated Armada.

Drake also had enemies, particularly among the nobility and court hangers-on who were jealous of his success. Even Elizabeth kept him at arm's length, all the while pocketing her share of his plunder. As Bergreen describes her, she was her father's daughter in her dealings with others. This was not meant as a compliment.

Bergreen ends by quoting John Maynard Keynes' analysis of the financial impact of Drake's piracy. After paying off all England's debt, Elizabeth still had enough to invest in international financial markets. This initial investment, compounded at three percent, almost exactly equaled Britain's foreign investment portfolio at the time of Keynes' writing. Just one of history's little coincidences? Keynes didn't think so.

I will end by giving Bergreen his due. He did finally make his case that Drake's piracy set the stage for England to supplant Spain as the world's leading naval and commercial power. Or, as the book's subtitle claims, Drake and his era transformed England into Great Britain and the British Empire.

Recommendation: Quite interesting in its description of sailing into the unknown so will appeal to naval history fans.

The Florentines

Several years ago I was able to briefly visit Florence. I wish I had more time there given the history behind the old city center. I really wish I had read Paul Strathern's book "The Florentines: From Dante to Galileo: The Transformation of Western Civilization" (Pegasus Books 2021, 348 pages plus notes, \$24 hardcover) beforehand.

Florence was the home of the Renaissance . . . every student of world history knows that . . . but the impact it had across multiple cultural disciplines is stunning. Strathern approaches this history by linking together mini biographies of the

key contributors. The chronology overlaps but the flow of time and the chain of development is clear.

He begins with Dante's "Divine Comedy" to provide the setting for the political and cultural environment of 14th century Florence, including all that Guelph and Ghibelline confusion. He follows with chapters on Fibonacci and the adoption of Arabic numerals, and then back to the writers Boccaccio and Petrarch. Next he takes us to the architects and mathematicians, often the same men. Leonardo first appears here but gets more attention several chapters later.

This is fast paced, and in the middle of the story Strathern pauses to talk about how all this was paid for. In a word: banking. The Medici are the best known but they arose only after the failure of a small handful of previous banking families. Banking was no guarantee of perpetual wealth, as these Florentines learned to their cost. He makes a solid argument for the overarching importance of trade as the economic accelerator fueled by international banking.

The Medici family serves as a kind of pivot in the Renaissance timeline and in the focus of the book. The topic moves from culture to economics and politics with the Medici family as the central actors. The Florentine republic, a republic by the standards of the age if not by ours, became more of an oligarchy or plutarchy with a sequence of Medici patriarchs serving as de facto dictators as well as financial benefactors.

The Medici eventually fell, not least owing to the spellbinding preaching of Savonarola. His bonfire of the vanities is a fascinating event which gets appropriate coverage as the coda of the Medici era of plutocratic rule. Still, the Medici managed to spawn two popes known more for their personal excess than their piety. Such were the times.

The Medici pivot leads to chapters on politics, art and science. The protagonists for these three branches of the late Renaissance are Machiavelli, Michelangelo and Galileo, all giants in their fields and all working primarily in Florence. One can follow the progress of western civilization from

the Middle Ages into modernity by way of the Florentine Renaissance.

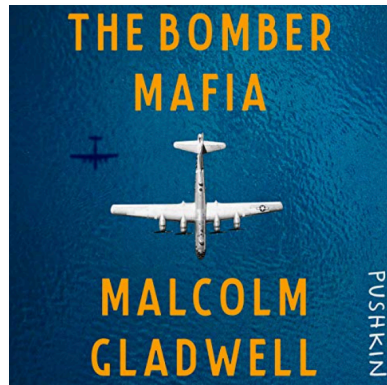
So why Florence? How did this mid-sized city accomplish so much when there were other cities making significant advances? Strathern posits that it took three ingredients for a breakthrough of this magnitude. Only Florence combined all three — wealth, civic freedom and talent. This understanding informs Strathern’s literary structure. Most of the book is devoted to what is arguably the greatest generations of talent all of which arose in Florence across a century and a half.

Recommendation: A fascinating history of the Renaissance. Read it if you have any interest in this period.

The Bomber Mafia

There is a moral aspect to war; just ask any national leader or general-in-chief. Most everyone is aware of Harry Truman’s mental struggles in making the atomic bomb decision. Even though it screams against all morality, there is a calculus involved in making this kind of decision. Call it reverse utilitarianism — causing the least harm to the fewest people. President Truman ultimately came down on the side of saving perhaps a million American and Japanese lives by avoiding a lengthy ground campaign against the Japanese home islands.

Malcolm Gladwell addresses the moral question head-on in his “The Bomber Mafia: A Dream, a Temptation, and the Longest Night of the Second World War” (Little, Brown and Company 2021, 256 pages, \$14 hardcover). Gladwell’s story begins with a group of renegade Army Air Corps officers during the 1930’s who hypothesized a technological breakthrough that would ensure precision bombing, that is bombs that hit only bona fide military targets and avoid civilian structures. These eccentrics, or true believers as Gladwell calls them, determined to move all warfare into the skies where collateral damage could be eliminated.



There is a side story about the development of the Norden bomb sight, invented by an equally eccentric genius, but which was dependent on nearly perfect climactic conditions. It worked well in theory but much less so in reality. A second side story recounts the invention of napalm and its efficacy of creating

uncontrollable firestorms. The “longest night of the war” refers to the first napalm-based bombing of Tokyo that caused immensely more deaths and destruction than either atomic bomb.

The book is both a technological accounting as well as a morality tale. The “bad guys” in the book are British Air Marshall Arthur “Bomber” Harris and U. S. General Curtis LeMay. Both were advocates of saturation or area bombing. Harris, to his discredit in my opinion, directed a deliberate strategy of destroying German civilian homes as his plan to win the war. No matter that this very strategy failed miserably when practiced by the Luftwaffe against British cities.

The Harris-LeMay strategy won the policy debate but had no real impact on the war’s outcome if a consensus of opinion of military historians is to be believed. Hiroshima is a special case that was necessary only because firebombing had not worked to force a Japanese surrender.

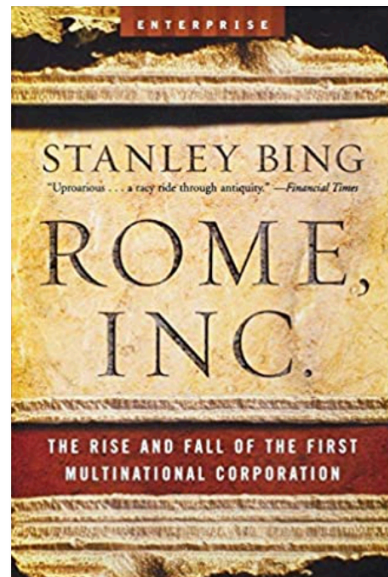
I listened to the audiobook version of “The Bomber Mafia.” When an interview is quoted, the actual recording was inserted rather than just read. It added a lot to my understanding of the intensity of the emotions involved.

While Gladwell cannot bring himself to side with Curtis LeMay, he begrudgingly admits that LeMay’s strategy contributed more to ultimate victory than the precision bombing approach, which simply did not work given the constant cloud cover over Japan.

Recommendation: Uncomfortable in that it forces rethinking about a disconcerting topic we would rather leave buried in our subconscious. Is the lesser of two evils still evil?

Rome, Inc.

Stanley Bing is part business writer, part humorist and part something else that defies description. His books include “What Would Machiavelli Do?” and “Sun Tzu Was a Sissy,” titles that certainly identify his writing style. So why shouldn’t he take on ancient Rome? “Rome, Inc: The Rise and Fall of the First Multinational Corporation” (W. W. Norton & Company 2006, 197 pages, \$15 hardcover) is his history of how Rome became great and then fell, all told in 21st century corporate boardroom language. Perhaps more satire than allegory, more parody than parable, Bing interprets Rome’s decisions and actions as if it were all happening in downtown Manhattan. His analogies are clever and humorous. He views Rome’s imperial wars as simple merger and acquisition activity with the



Roman army being nothing more than an ancient version of an aggressive sales force.

I particularly liked his comparison of Fabius’s delaying strategy in the Second Punic War to that of modern divorce lawyers — just delay until the other side gives up. (Not that I have any experience with divorce lawyers.)

He completely missed the boat in comparing the Roman left-wing mobs with our contemporary left wing, which Bing considers inept at using mob violence. But this was written in 2006 so one can forgive his lack of prescience. How many of us could have predicted our current crisis 15 years ago?

Recommendation: It’s short and funny so worth the diversion but it should be read as more of a commentary on current corporate culture than Roman history.

— *Mark Franke*



Thomas Hoepker, Sept. 11, 2001

The Outstater

Words: Jot Them Down Quick Before They Disappear

“Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, there’s no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It’s merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect.” — Syme of the Ministry for Truth in George Orwell’s “1984”

(Sept. 8) — It is one of oldest bits of wisdom, attributed to Confucius: “When words lose their meaning, men lose their freedom.” We are living in a time when that wisdom applies. You are encouraged to begin your own list of words in danger of being redefined to meaningless. Here is mine.

Immigrant — As a nation of immigrants, Americans tend to romanticize the word. Even so, until recently it has meant someone who comes here with the intent of becoming American at least in the constitutional sense, i.e., the individual valued above the state, equality of opportunity, the chance to own property. In any case, an immigrant now is thought to be anyone who has managed to set foot on U.S. soil. That could describe an invader, an occupier or an accidental settler expecting

Americans to pay him to live exactly as he lived in the failed society from which he so desperately came. The first of 3,000 to 5,000 Afghans, many with blank visas or no identification who took advantage of confusion at the Kabul airport to board evacuation flights, have begun setting foot on Indiana soil. We assume that with burkas, cousin marriage, child brides, Sharia Law and all they are to be treated as fellow Hoosiers until the Biden administration can figure out which ones have terrorist connections. Where, by the way, is Gov. Eric Holcomb?

Veteran — It was assumed in earlier generations that if you found yourself in the military there was at least some chance that you would be put in harm’s way in the defense of your country. Thus the rigor of boot camp. When somebody says they are a “veteran” today they could have enlisted with a \$40,000 bonus and chosen a career path that involved no possibility they would be in any danger before retiring as a CRT leadership specialist at age 37 with 50 percent pay for life. The distinction should be made clearer.

Capitalism — This once described an incredibly successful economic system in which the prices and the distribution of goods and services were determined by competition and voluntary transactions between individuals rather than by government decree. It now means greed and crass consumption if not ecological ruin. The truth is that the free working of a capitalist system discourages all of that (when prices increase, consumption drops). In higher education, capitalism serves today mainly as the straw man for socialism, an idea that works so poorly in practice that it needs to be explained as a tangential abstract.

Racist — You are a racist if you are white and anyone decides to call you one, and furthermore you have been a racist since infancy. Don’t bother

protesting that you do not believe that any particular race is generally superior to any other or proclaiming that you harbor no hatred or even disrespect for any other race. Nobody will believe you.

Liars — We were taught in journalism school that you should be extremely careful when you publicly label someone a “liar.” It is a legally precise word (one that must be proven true) and freedom of speech or not you could be liable for damages. But with the judicial system topsyturvy, a liar can be anyone with whom someone disagrees or whom they dislike or whose reputation they have reason to destroy or cancel — all with impunity.

Investment — If you follow municipal economic development you need reminded that the government cannot “invest” in anything because it has no money of its own. That is true no matter how much your mayor would like it to be so or how much he would like you to believe it to be so. When the mayor promises to pay a private company a profit up front, that company is not an investor but rather a rent-seeker or government proxy. In sum, investing in a town once meant that someone was using their own money at some risk and therefore was expressing confidence in the economic viability of a particular venture, project or community. Now it is more likely to mean that a larger than usual deception is being carried out

Evolution — At a time when a record 60 percent of Americans say they believe in “evolution,” meaning that all life can be explained through mutation and natural selection over the expanse of time, science is telling us that Charles Darwin’s theory has limited application. Whatever that limit turns out to be, it will come nowhere near drawing an ancestral connection between an amoeba and, say, Whoopi Goldberg. Such an expansive definition represents a pet theory of 19th-century progressives that is past its prime, propped up by logic fallacies, bogus claims and empirical evidence that is disintegrating under modern microscopy and discoveries in the areas of common descent, natural selection, the fossil

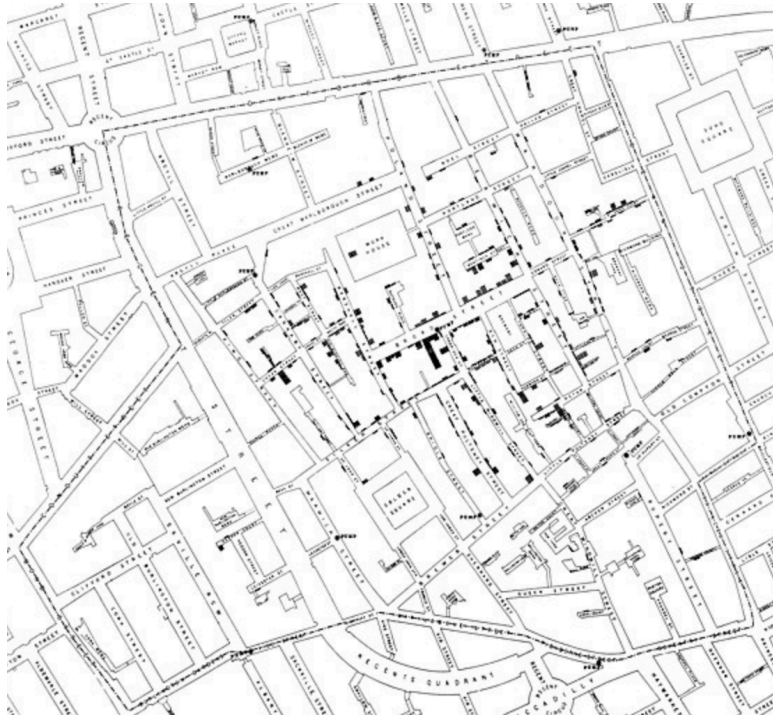
record, biogeography, information theory, evolutionary psychology, artificial intelligence and the growing intelligent-design movement. Evolution, in other words, is devolving.

Property — If private property is mentioned at all in this age of equity and social justice, there is the allusion of passive self-interest: “This is my property, not yours.” Rarely is there an understanding of the dynamic force contained in the absolute right to own property, beginning with one’s physical self. It is the basis of Western Civilization and capsulizes a moral teaching thousands of years old, an economic expression of the Golden Rule. That is, those who own property can appreciate the need to treat the property of others as they would want their own treated. Those who don’t, don’t. History does not speak kindly of societies that have operated outside that paradigm.

Language — Lastly, there is language itself. Social scientists have been working for decades trying to prove that chimpanzees, porpoises, dogs (but interestingly not cats) can “talk,” can develop a language comparable to ours. By that it is meant not just sounds or communication but a language that allows abstract thought, the recording of measurements for later use, comprehension of space, time, etc. We are pleased to say that they have all but given up on all that. Nor have evolutionists been able to find evidence that speech is either hardwired into human brains or evolved like an opposing thumb and the like. The thinking now is that speech came to humans relatively suddenly as an artifact, i.e., something borrowed from nature to serve as a cultural tool such as the flint ax, the moldboard plow or algebra. The late Tom Wolfe argued that language is the original artifact of all of man’s artifacts, as in John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Using Statistics to Stop (or Start) a Crime Epidemic

(Aug. 22) —Citing statistics showing that blacks make up 14 percent of her state's population but 53 percent of prisoners. and that



The clusters of cholera cases in the London epidemic of 1854.

blacks make up 80 percent of those incarcerated on a felony firearm charge, a Michigan prosecutor says she will no longer act on felony firearms charges.

That is fair warning that you should be on guard when statistics are used to justify public policy. As is the case with automobiles, sledgehammers and, yes, firearms, it depends on how they are being used.

It will do little good, for instance, to ask the typical police chief for crime numbers. What you will get is a year-over-year FBI-manipulated percentage of crimes grouped into random categories. This may be useful for petitioning the council for increased public-safety funding or, conversely, taking political credit for any incidental drop in one category or another, but it doesn't have anything to do with solving or preventing crimes.

Nonetheless, a study out of George Mason University of crime in New York City offers hope. The researchers, using a data base begun during the Giuliani years, focused on high-crime

"hot spots." Looking at NYPD crime reports for 2010, 2015 and 2020, the researchers estimated that 1 percent of streets experienced 25 percent of crime and 5 percent of streets experienced 50 percent of crime.

Most important, because the crime statistics were broken down to one-block units, the researchers were able to see where one street had high instances of crime while the adjacent street had none. Here is their summary:

"It is misleading to classify whole neighborhoods as crime hot spots, since the majority of streets — even in higher-crime areas — are not. This is an important lesson for police and ordinary citizens who mistakenly see large areas as crime-ridden. We also found a good deal of stability in the locations of crime hot spots. Nearly all the streets that were hot spots as we have defined them in 2010 were also hot spots in 2020."

That suggests a definite crime-fighting strategy: A data map can be constructed to set a police car on top of every crime hot spot in your city. That is what New York City did with phenomenal success during the administration of Police Chief Bernard Kerik.

It is said that such a map was proposed in Indianapolis during the Ballard administration but was abandoned when Black Lives Matter introduced its era of "racial reckoning." It was vigorously argued that police should not in any way target economically or socially distressed neighborhoods where crime is the result of root causes dating back to slavery.

That may or may not turn out to be an accurate assessment of the psychopathy. If there is mayhem in the streets, however, a city does not have to wait for a scholastic explication or a socio-political resolution. Law-abiding residents of the inner city deserve protection from the criminals in the next block as much as suburban residents

deserve protection six miles away. Our personal and property rights are not geographically proscribed.

And strange as it may sound, the history of a cholera epidemic contributes to this discussion. Cholera in 19th-century England was checked not by medical discovery but by statistical analysis similar to that used by Chief Kerik.

In 1854, a London anesthesiologist mapped all the known cholera deaths, including those clustered around 13 public wells in the central city. Although it would be decades before London health authorities identified a link to the water-borne bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*, they simply closed the pinpointed wells.

The lives of many persons, rich and poor, were saved.

Just the Man for the Job

(Aug. 19) — The Governor, following form, has created a new state health commission with former state senator Luke Kenley as its chairman.

Because that's what we need right now, isn't it? Another layer of bureaucracy, this one wielding gubernatorial power over what medicine we can have and when we can have it.

But its mandate is actually unlimited, according to at least one commission member. The definition of "health" will include the behavior and environment of the public and such issues as lack of secure housing, work and education. The governor promises that his new commission will not merely brainstorm but will make changes — rule, in other words.

And Kenley is just the man for the job, the perfect model of an Indiana Republican, an Eagle Scout-type of fellow, a businessman who fell in love with politics, an Army officer, a graduate of an Ivy League law school and someone who as health commissioner should scare you to death.

For if you own or are a frequent a small business know that Kenley's legislative record reads like a resume for the administrative state. There have been few consolidations of Statehouse power or plans for regulatory over management

that he has effectively opposed (as long as Republicans friends were in charge). The press release boasts that Kenley "has spent decades managing complex issues and budgets for the state."

Oh, that's comforting. This is the guy who as chairman of the powerful committee on tax and fiscal policy blocked the elimination of the family-farm-killing inheritance tax until he could be assured that the lost revenue would be made up: "I can't see how we are going to replace the dollars."

Did you get that? Kenley believed the money was his before it was yours. Now he's going to help figure out how to control your health.

What could go wrong?

Hogsett Maps Indy 'Safety'

"They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid." — Micah 4:4, quoted by George Washington in his 1790 letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport.

(Aug. 12) — For more than a half century, since the riots in the Watts district of Los Angeles, progressives have been throwing money at inner-city communities hoping some of it would stick. Mayor Joe Hogsett this week carried on that tradition announcing a plan carefully modeled on what has been shown not to work.

Yes, there is funding for some police gizmos that will track gunfire, the usefulness of which depends on whether a prosecutor will risk the displeasure of George Soros-like political donors and actually charge any of the perps rounded up.

But that is only a tiny item in the \$166 million that Hogsett would spend on what he broadly defines as public safety. The sum approaches that needed to give every inner city resident a flat-out bribe to stop 1) killing each other and 2) endangering the mayor's political future.

So crime does pay, or at least crime that increases at a rate that begs political accountability. Thus, there will be a larger than

usual ration this year for feel-good projects dreamed up by the ever-present virtucrats, race hustlers, rent-seekers and grifters. Here are examples lauded this week by that self-styled criminologist James Briggs, columnist for the Indianapolis Star:

“The two most promising ideas in my view are Hogsett’s proposals to spend \$30 million on mental health services and \$37 million to take six peacemakers, who work on resolving conflicts before they spill into violence, and expand it to a staff of 50. In addition, Hogsett wants to award \$15 million per year over three years to community groups and spend millions more on hunger relief and re-entry services.”

Briggs is right — sort of. There are social interventions for helping inner-city children and adolescents that have proven to work in specific circumstances: mentoring for young men without fathers, educational enrichment, preschool, counseling services and the like.

But an actual crime expert, Raj Chetty of Harvard University, adds a qualification. He has conducted detailed geographic analyses of upward socioeconomic mobility down to the level of city blocks. Chetty found that those neighborhoods that most of us would consider promising, regardless of income level, are those with low racial bias and high levels of social interaction.

These are the places, the special circumstances, where “we’re all in this together” is more than just a slogan. The problem is that when crime increases so does bias and a reluctance to interact. Fewer feel like joining in on another round of kumbaya. The special circumstances evaporate.

On that point, the social scientist Charles Murray, though roundly hated by wokesters such as Briggs, has something important to say:

“All (social interventions) have a chance of making a contribution if they are implemented in neighborhoods where they are reinforced by large numbers of functional two-parent families. But African and Latin parents in such families

have exactly the same priority as those in functional two-parent European and Asian families: Do everything possible to find a safe place to raise their children. The result is that most of them have left high-crime areas for other neighborhoods and that the sponsors of the interventions do not have large numbers of functional two-parent families to reinforce their efforts. The places where the need for social interventions is greatest are the places where they have the least chance of working.”

Heather Mac Donald, another crime expert, agrees:

“The one public-health/social-service intervention that would make a profound difference in combating inner-city violence is the reconstruction of the black family. Public officials must recognize the problem and promote the role of fathers in raising law-abiding children. Mayors are predictably silent about family breakdown, however, preferring to focus on an ‘all-of-government approach’ to gun violence.”

Indeed, Mayor Hogsett’s gun-control plan is a dodge, an attempt to misdirect from all of that. There is no policy that is more loved by progressive voters but has been more thoroughly debunked. For starters, virtually all of the guns used in Indianapolis crimes already are being carried illegally. Hogsett, then, would outlaw or severely restrict the rest. It is a plan so risible that only a politician in desperate need of an anti-crime plan, any anti-crime plan, could take it seriously.

But how about this: FBI statistic show that in a typical American city a subset of the population amounting to less than .05 percent is responsible for somewhere between 50 percent and 75 percent of homicides.

That suggests police should stop and search anyone in that subset wandering around a high-crime area around 3 a.m., say, and arrest or detain him (men make up 92.7 percent of the prison population) if justified by a record search or evidence collected by the investigating officer.

Do that and your murder rate goes down — guaranteed.

And that is exactly the kind of draconian method that the Indy Star and Mayor Hogsett abhor.

Term Limits I

(July 29) — Listening to Nancy Pelosi urge her select committee to thoroughly investigate the Jan. 6 demonstrations, I realized I had heard one of her talking points before.

As you may know, a member of the Indiana congressional delegation was blackballed by Pelosi for “statements and actions” that she felt would “impact the integrity of the committee.”

You cannot be sure which statements offended the Speaker but I have in front of me an Aug. 4, 2019, tweet from the offender that may be germane:

“I deployed to Afghanistan as a response to radical Islamic terrorism,” the tweet says. “We now face a different enemy that has also emerged from the shadows but demands the same focus and determination to root out and destroy. #WhiteSupremacistTerrorism should be named, targeted and defeated.”

Perhaps Pelosi is upset with Rep. Jim Banks because in more than two years (the time from D-Day to Germany’s surrender) he has been unable to name, target and defeat a threat to America so serious that it brings to mind the Taliban and its Al-Qaeda allies if not Hitler.

On first reading the tweet, I thought that the wording didn’t sound like Jim Banks. His office assured me, however, that it was written by the representative himself. The staffer added that he emphatically agreed with his boss’s view.

OK, so given the array of crises facing our nation, does Representative Banks believe that white supremacy is an organized menace demanding the same focus as Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan? And would Nancy Pelosi even recognize an armed insurrection if it camped on her husband’s stock portfolio?

No, they are both postures of moment. In the case of Banks, coming as he does from a white bread congressional district, there was a need to express a degree of wokeness. In the case of Pelosi, she was merely throwing raw meat to her troops.

Both are detached from any factual basis — imaginary, in other words.

In the one case, if white supremacists exist in large numbers they are incredibly ineffectual. Black-on-white murders dwarf white-on-black murders (2:1). And the video evidence from Jan. 6 shows only a demonstration getting badly out of hand.

This is what you get from Washington — a ghost debate. The goal is never to name, target and defeat anything, or to stop any sort of trouble. The goal is to keep the facts from interfering with whatever political advantage might fall one’s way.

It is the price the rest of us pay for abiding professional politicians and a complicit media.

Term limits would improve matters.

Our BLM Friend Explained

“Weekend violence in Indy sent residents and visitors scrambling for cover in Broad Ripple and Downtown. At least six were shot with one killed in five separate shootings in just two hours. City Officials remained silent and were missing in action all weekend.” — Rick Snyder, Fraternal Order of Police

(July 27) — A friend surprised us this weekend by announcing his support for Black Lives Matter. We were surprised because the friend is discerning enough to understand that BLM is not what it pretends to be, that it intentionally or inadvertently would invert our system of government and divide the country along racial lines.

His support, it therefore can be assumed, is equivocal. What he might have been saying is that he feels the pain of urban black families and intends to do what he can to help. He is a soft-hearted man.

Good for him. It is unfortunate, though, that for several generations such men have begun their sincere attempts to help well short of where it might have been effective — that is, by ensuring that black families enjoy the benefit of private property, rule of law and the attendant public safety.

Indiana is not a Third World country — not yet. Wherever you live here you should expect to have neighborhood grocery stores, to walk to evening church services, to send your children on a summer bike ride, to find nearby work, to plant a garden, to invest in property, to build generational wealth and everything else that being an American defines.

Black Lives Matter is making such normal activity problematic with the contention — dogma, actually — that tactical policing is racially motivated rather than racially incidental. The preference is for no effective policing whatsoever.

Heather Mac Donald, an expert on crime, has a better handle on reality. Her observations bear quoting at length:

“The main evidence of racism lodged against police officers is the racially disparate rates of stops and arrests. But the police cannot fight crime without generating such racial disparities in the data. In 2019, blacks made up over 74 percent of all shooting suspects in New York City, for example, though they are only 23 percent of the city’s population. Adding Hispanic shootings to these numbers accounts for over 96 percent of all shootings in the city. These disparities mean that virtually every time the cops respond to a ‘shots fired’ call, they are in a minority neighborhood and being given the description of a minority suspect (assuming anyone is even cooperating with the police). They are also likely being called on behalf of minority residents, who made up over 96 percent of all shooting victims in 2019. It is not racism that sends police to minority neighborhoods; it is the reality of crime.”

Ignoring that reality has cost lives in Indianapolis. The city this year surpassed both New York City and Chicago in per capita murders.

In the face of that, municipal government has seemed powerless.

What else could we expect? Paralysis is the predictable result of confusing cause and effect, of trying to apply disjointed solutions to life-and-death problems. Given the situation, no Indianapolis family can feel safe.

It is suspected that Mayor Joe Hogsett knows that Mac Donald’s position is correct but he finds it inconvenient. And few think that his blaming guns is a serious response given that the guns used in crimes are illegal in the first place (.01 percent of all guns). The truth is that his own reluctance to order more aggressive stop-and-search tactics has emboldened criminals to carry weapons and subsequently use them more often.

Nonetheless, Mayor Hogsett and his allies on city council are calculating that they can shift and dodge their way through to the other side of the issue using the cover of neighborhood crime committees and the usual assortment of do-good agencies.

That would be a miscalculation. For *they are* the issue. Their municipal government will either restore public safety or it will consign sections of the city to Soweto-like misery and hostility.

If we are ever to overcome racial disparities it will be because we have a hard-headed citizenry, black and white, willing to address how things are instead of how we wish them to be.

That is a big “if.”

Botswana Yes, South Africa No

(July 22) — This column is dedicated to Indiana issues. That’s why I’m writing about South Africa and Botswana. It is important for Hoosiers to be reminded of the tragedy of failed economic leadership, reminded without the distraction of competing racial and political identities.

For South Africa is falling apart, and doing so all on its own, long past the point it can blame a white-dominated superstructure, and falling apart in a way that has lessons for black leaders in urban Indiana.

For decades, the South African economy has been shaped by a policy known as Broad Based Black Economic Employment (BBBEE), a policy using the same tactics to achieve “equity” that activists here are demanding. It can be fairly said South Africa is history’s first experiment in applied Critical Race Theory.

Does this sound familiar? Companies there receive a BBBEE scorecard based on hiring black workers, elevating black management and giving black South Africans a share of ownership. Companies with high scores are given favorable tax treatment and preferences in government contracts.

If there is disparity it is assumed there is racism — as simple as that. You can hear something to that effect at any Fort Wayne or Indianapolis city council meeting these days.

Well, it isn’t as simple as that, unless you like social and economic disaster. The disincentives to be productive, to form strong families, to choose accountable political representation, have destroyed South Africa, once the richest country in sub-Saharan Africa. The same elements, please know, would do similar damage to Indiana if we let them.

The collapse of economic freedom has driven the unemployment rate in South Africa to 42 percent. More than four percent of all deaths there now are murders, and the murder rate is increasing by 8 percent a year. The South African Property Owners Association estimates that ongoing rioting already has cost the country \$3.4 billion in lost output, while 150,000 jobs have been placed at risk.

There hasn’t been a word in the Indiana corporate press about any of this, including last week’s country-wide looting, some of it by the police. That is because the media elite would have to explain why its simplistic explication all these years of South Africa being a glorious extension of a Selma civil rights march doesn’t hold up. Nelson Mandela was no Martin Luther King. He was just another socialist, now a failed one.

In neighboring Botswana, better leadership brought better results.

At independence in 1965, 72 percent of the citizens of Botswana over the age of 25 had no formal schooling. There were only 22 people in the country with university degrees and only one hundred had completed secondary schooling. It had less than eight miles of paved roads. Landlocked and 70 percent desert, Botswana was the world’s third poorest nation.

Since then, Botswana has enjoyed one of the world’s fastest growing economies. Lipton Matthews, a researcher for the Mises Institute, thinks that has a lot to do with how Botswanans traditionally handled property and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled:

“In precolonial Botswana, mechanisms created by the Tswana tribe acted as a bulwark against tyranny. Relative to other tribes, their precolonial institutions sought to limit the authority of chiefs. Chiefs were required to consult the Kgotla (traditional assembly) before presenting a decision, even though they had the final say. As a result, compared with other ethnic groups in Africa, the culture of the Tswana fostered dissent. Moreover, in precolonial Botswana, communal and private property rights coexisted. For instance, unoccupied land, which was abundant, served a communal function although the chief reserved the right to redistribute it to members of his tribe for agricultural purposes. But, on the other hand, private property rights mandated by customary law allowed for the accumulation of personal articles and cattle.”

Mathews says that the post-independence government of Botswana rejected the envy-driven anti-white racism that swept the region in the 1970s. Instead, Botswana embraced refugees from South Africa and Zimbabwe and they made a significant contribution to its economy.

For instance, Botswana invited foreign capital but did not allow its mineral wealth to be stolen, channeling it instead into critical national institutions. It rejected the rank redistributionism and cronyism that characterizes the leadership of South Africa and Zimbabwe — and, come to think

about it, characterizes Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit or Washington, D.C.

Botswana now has a GDP per capita that is the highest in all of Africa. It has the highest Human Development Index of continental sub-Saharan Africa.

Black lives indeed matter there.

Dystopian ‘Equity’

“A Raytheon toolkit instructs employees to oppose ‘equality,’ defined as ‘treating each person the same . . . regardless of their differences,’ and strive instead for ‘equity,’ which ‘focuses on the equality of the outcome.’ The company claims that the colorblind standard of ‘equal treatment and access to opportunities’ is not enough; ‘anti-racist’ policies must sometimes utilize unequal treatment to achieve equal outcomes.” — City Journal, July 6, 2021

(July 8) — We recognize that equality of opportunity is sacrificed in pursuit of equality of results.”

When we jotted down that sentence on a napkin at Acapulco Joe’s some 32 years ago we did not think it controversial. We were trying to list some obvious truths on a mission statement to guide our little group.

We hoped to prompt others into thinking more deeply about the then-nascent social justice movement here and its push for an egalitarian utopia. We thought it would become clear that equality not only was impossible but its pursuit was dangerous.

Boy, were we wrong.

Some outside our membership now wonder why we hang on to such an anachronism. “Equality” isn’t even a real word anymore, thrown down the memory hole to be replaced with “equity,” defined by results and not mere opportunity.

And the constitutional guarantees attached to property are outside that definition. The Biden administration, for example, wants to limit the ownership of single-family homes and order cities

to build subsidized high rises. Biden would situated them in the suburbs in a “diverse” manner. It is said to be the anti-racist, equitable thing to do.

No, it’s the dystopian thing to do, and how did we get into this mess anyway?

George Soros pulling levers behind a curtain is one answer, but there is a more humdrum explanation.

What if we were overcome gradually by prosperity? What if a pleasant post-war economy made it possible for several generations of Americans to grow to adulthood never needing to face an absolute, something that couldn’t be forcefully equitized?

Fewer of us now own a business, an experience that includes the absolute of a weekly payroll. Fewer of our doctors, now in partnerships with huge hospitals, feel an absolute life-or-death relationship with us as patients. Fewer of our courts recognize the absolute of the Constitution. Fewer of our elected representatives recognize the absolute of Common Law. Life itself is not considered an absolute at its beginnings in a womb. Fewer of us call upon an almighty God for humility and wisdom.

Nothing today prepares us to see the cost of making things equitable, the impossibility of it. The concept is an abstract, a simplistic idea that sounds good at a cocktail party, in a college dorm room or as a cartoon. Dan Henninger touched on this in a recent column:

“A phrase like ‘diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility’ is what’s known as a political narrative — a repeatable description of political goals whose implicit message is: Who could be against this? It is not an overstatement to say the future of the world will rise and fall on whether these pablum-like narratives can be turned into hard policy.”

Most can’t imagine having to pay for something so seemingly fair-minded. But we will pay for it. There is a cost, one so high that economists don’t try to put a number on it. It is

paid in lost productivity, the kind that only freedom makes possible.

Hoosiers should know better than anyone the truth of that. Indiana was home to the first full-blown experiment in equity. The New Harmony village was founded in Posey County in 1825 as a socialist utopia on the Wabash. It was disbanded two years later when its productive members got tired of supporting its unproductive ones.

It boils down to this: If you allow equity to rule your village, your city, your state, your country, you will fall into mediocrity if not poverty. Enemies, domestic and foreign, will be at your door. Liberty will be a memory.

An exaggeration? Ask Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Ask Ayn Rand. Ask a Portland retailer.

So for now we're going to keep that little sentence in the mission statement. It might come into fashion again.

Term Limits II

(July 6) — One of the great things about our form of democracy, perhaps the greatest thing, is that when we find ourselves with inept rulers nobody mounts a revolution and organizes a firing squad. At worst, the rascal is nudged out of office into a six-digit pension.

That thought occurred as Gov. Eric Holcomb's pre-Covid decision to lead a trade mission to China in the middle of a trade war came into sharper focus.

Now don't misunderstand. We like free trade here, but when the other side uses our concessions to increase military advantage, steal proprietary technology and manipulate our currency then that is something else.

In any case, Holcomb's trip flew in the face of a warning from then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that U.S. governors were being targeted personally and politically by China's intelligence service. Moreover, China placed retaliatory tariffs specifically on Midwest agricultural products.

"I think (China's) philosophy was, let's undermine the President's authority in the Midwest where a lot of his base is," said Gov. Pete

Ricketts of Nebraska, a more savvy type of governor.

China's move backfired, Ricketts told the *Epoch Times* last week. "Farmers and ranchers, while they were not happy to see the demand for their goods go down, were patriotic and totally supported the President's position about taking a tough stance with the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) on trade issues."

Not in Indiana, though, where the Holcomb administration and the corporate media continued to give China best-friend treatment.

While we are on the general topic, were we wrong to tell Governor Holcomb that it is disconcerting Indiana University has 3,000 students from China paying annual tuition equal to the budget provided the school by Indiana taxpayers?

Should he worry that those students have taken an oath of loyalty to the CCP? And what about Eli Lilly & Co. of Indianapolis, a major political player (\$5 million in lobbying last year), planning 40 new launches in China in the next 10 years?

Finally, although we don't know that any deals made by our man Holcomb were contralateral to U.S. trade policy, he didn't make much of a dent in the trade balance. Indiana's exports to China have dropped 30 percent. And however pleasant his trip, he was unable to reverse a 17-year trend that saw Indiana losing three jobs in trading with China for every one it gained.

Term limits may be what save us.

The Pence 'Mandate'

(June 25) — We don't know who advised then Vice-President Mike Pence to immediately certify the 2020 presidential election results. We can be sure that the decision was made on the spot and under the most intense political pressure imaginable. We somehow doubt that the deliberation was as simplistic as, "What would be the 'American' thing to do?"

That, however, is the line that the Pence-for-president team has settled on. "The truth is, there

is almost no idea more un-American than the notion that any one person could choose the American president,” Pence said yesterday at the Ronald Reagan Library.

Well yes, but nor do we depend on a single person to tell us what is or is not “American.” We have a popular culture, branches of government and a constitution for that.

And we have fair elections — or that was the plan.

In an alternative interpretation of the moment, the Vice-President was not being asked to make a legal decision. He was being asked to allow Congress, the courts and the state legislatures time to sort out the mess that was the election.

And we have historians. For the fact is that Pence in effect did choose the president on Jan. 6 — and the nation is living with the consequences of what was at base a political call.

And so is Mike Pence. For the guess now is that the call was a bad call, thus his decision so many months later in the shadow of Ronald Reagan to explain himself yet again. What in the end may be determined to be “un-American,” fairly or not, is his seeming to choose ambition over loyalty.

In a political life, there sometimes comes a moment when you are asked to rise above political smarm and do more than stand in front of a friendly audience mouthing platitudes. There may come a moment when you have to reach down deep and make a decision regardless of political fortune or favor.

The hope is that Mike Pence, in a later time and context, on a different issue, on better counsel, will get another chance to make that kind of decision. He is a good American and deserves the benefit of our doubts.

Go Woke and Go Broke

“The feeling that the government should ‘do something’ has seldom been based on a comparison of what actually happens when government does and when it does not ‘do something.’” — Thomas Sowell

(June 24) — Here’s a question for those of us living in the post-factual world: Is anyone checking to see if the laws — any of the laws — actually work?

This indifference to reality is not new, of course, but it seems more pervasive. The mass media, so focused on good intentions and the perfectibility of humankind, doesn’t have time for results. Nor does this generation of lawmakers.

In the 1980s there was a brief period when cost-benefit analysis was part of the legislative tool kit. I remember reading about some state making detailed risk calculations as to whether pollution levels at a manufacturing plant, say, were less harmful to workers than the stress of losing their jobs if the plant were to be shut down by environmentalists.

That kind of thinking went out the window during the pandemic. And on another topic, note how many times we learn that a collapsed bridge or other failed piece of infrastructure constructed according to mandated, cost-heavy design standards had just passed a government-required safety inspection.

A new study says that the progressive’s most sacred cow, the minimum wage, in addition to pushing workers out of the job market entirely, effectively constrains even retained employees’ hours, cuts their eligibility for benefits and reduces the consistency of weekly and daily schedules.

“So, we make life more difficult for marginal people we’re supposedly trying to help,” says our friend and adjunct Eric Schansberg. “We reduce their ability to earn money; we remove the dignity that comes with work; and we take away their best opportunities to build skills and experience through work. How is that attractive — practically or ethically?”

Another example: Does anyone other than Joe Biden misunderstand the perverse and data-heavy relationship between gun-control laws and increased crimes with guns? How about climate

change, née global warming? Increased spending on education and results in the classroom?

Here's one more: There are few issues we have discussed more fervently than equity, defined as equality of results. So what is the result of the women's equity campaign, a campaign heartily endorsed by Gov. Eric Holcomb, the leadership of a multi-term GOP supermajority and the guests at every Carmel dinner party for three decades?

Well, the unwoke have known for some time that women's pay, adjusted for factors such as job dangers, skills and responsibilities, work experience, specialization, child-rearing, lifestyle preferences, etc. is not that far out of whack. Regardless, the pressure has only intensified for government to ensure that women's and men's pay be numerically identical.

We should be seeing some results, especially if the gap is a simple matter of prejudice.

But the percentage of women who are full-time wage and salary workers has remained maddeningly steady. And in Indiana in pre-Covid 2019, the latest year for which data is available, women's median usual weekly earnings were only \$726, or 73.6 percent of the \$986 median usual weekly earnings for their male counterparts, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That compares with 84.7 percent in 2016 — a drop of more than 10 percent.

What the heck?

Those social influencers who have been clamoring for ever-greater penalties for inequity have some explaining to do. Their remedies are flawed somehow, if in fact their remedies are applicable at all.

In this as so many other issues about which it is said government must "do something," there are hidden factors and unintended consequences for which they have failed to make adjustment.

The fact is that in large swaths of life government has no idea what it's doing. Somebody should be keeping track of that.

Indy Rigor Mortis

"We see, in too many instances, conflict resolution being meted out by the use of guns. And we are working with community organizations and neighborhood groups to try to stem the tide. And I am cautiously optimistic that the commitment we are making will pay dividends." — Mayor Joe Hogsett

(June 21) — The leadership of Indianapolis is paralyzed. The brows of the deputy mayors are beginning to display worried, unattractive lines. Nobody wants to face this summer's surge in crime.

The statistics are irrefutable. It need only be said that the city has reached per-capita murder parity with Chicago. The reason is not complicated. It can be explained in a paragraph.

Since ire over the death of George Floyd swept the nation, police in Indianapolis as elsewhere have been told to step back. That has embolden an element of the population that according to FBI statistics accounts for 10 times more mayhem even in the best of times.

That's the full explanation: The violently inclined feel more comfortable being violently inclined, thus more violence.

What is complicated is the constitutional incapability of Indianapolis politicians to acknowledge any of that. And as a result they cannot draw the causal line between facile policing and murderous behavior, or even describe out loud the necessary demographic profile of the crimes.

So they stand there staring at an amorphous chalk outline on the sidewalk. If asked, they will say that a particular group is not by nature inculpatory, so past injustices must somehow be involved. But this is said quietly and only in sympathetic company because it can no longer withstand open debate.

What will happen now is predictable. The leadership of Indianapolis will not — cannot — change. Those with enough money will flee the insanity while the hapless souls left behind

become more fearful and eventually harden into warring groups.

And historians will wonder why such obvious commentary as this ever had to be written down.

Candidates to the Ramparts!

(June 16)—The savvy conservatives in my city had taken a step back from local politics. That was understandable. It didn't make sense handing money to office-holders, watching them ignore campaign promises and then not hear from them until the next campaign.

On top of that, incumbents and party favorites were thought to be sure things. You either punched their ticket, however ugly the voting record, or you sat out the dance. You needed to know the players.

That may be changing, at least at the city primary level. There are three factors now in play:

Local media has fragmented to the point that advertising and marketing dollars cannot be spent effectively. Media endorsements can even be counterproductive. And a campaign funding gap is not necessarily fatal.

Voters are getting wise to the "we have to hang together" message when it is code for nothing's going to change. Ditto when they are asked to ignore errant or self-serving voting records "because the alternative would be worse."

Political parties have become detached and elitist. As a result, platforms and talking points are unconvincing. A straightforward campaign focused on actual problems and realistic solutions catches the public's interest all by itself.

In short, the door to civil engagement is wide open. You can finance a competitive primary campaign at one-third that of the most well-heeled opponent. Connections? You no longer need to schmooze a local publisher or even a party chairman. You just jump in at the opportune time.

Call it populism or whatever, but it is a new way of thinking about politics in Indiana.

Detailed below are two model campaigns of this type, ones in a midsized southern Indiana city

and one in a larger city in the northeast part of the state. Note that neither candidate had experience in public affairs, both having merely walked off the street to apply common sense and private-sector experience to their community's problems.

Ryan Cummins

The owner of a family landscaping business, Cummins won election and re-election for a 2nd District seat as the only Republican on the Terre Haute Common Council. He did so by asking the same questions of public spending as he does of his business spending. When the answers didn't jibe with the facts, he would find himself the only vote in opposition. He cast hundreds of solitary votes.

Yet, and here is an important point, Cummins didn't dilute his arguments by trying to engineer council votes or net public support. He merely allowed the facts, built into carefully researched questioning, to speak for themselves.

For example, Cummins had a response for the unions asking for increases in pay or benefits. It was the same as he gave to his own employees, business partners and vendors: "I would love to give you more money (or a longer vacation or increased benefits or whatever) but what can you do for the city that you are not doing under the current arrangement?" He would follow up by asking the turnover rate for a given city job and how many qualified persons applied for any opening.

During his second campaign, members of the fire and police unions planted protest signs around his house and business. And during budget hearings they would bring their wives and children carrying hand-painted signs implying that Cummins was a threat to their families.

Cummins, who was self-financed (\$5,000), won re-election by a 3:1 margin in one of the most Democrat areas of the state against an opponent who had held high office in both the Bayh and O'Bannon administrations. State legislators and prominent local lawyers worked the polls against him.

Jason Arp

A former trader in mortgaged-backed securities, Arp was reelected last year to his second term from Fort Wayne's 4th District. During his first term, Arp used his bank experience to expose how various of the city's supposed redevelopment projects paid the "investors" up front and were little more than real estate schemes. He suggested repealing the local business property tax and withdrawing funding from the city's highly politicized economic-development apparatus.

Although he was denounced by Greater Fort Wayne, Inc. (an amalgam Chamber of Commerce), Arp's logic stuck: It would encourage more investment if all businesses were allowed to keep their money rather than be forced to give it to a quasi-public agency to distribute to the politically selected. He put together a map showing the large amount of downtown property that had been taken off the tax rolls for one favored project or another.

Arp's positions were so mischaracterized by the local newspaper that he would eventually decline interviews after council meetings. And during his reelection campaign, he decided as a tactical matter it would be a waste of time to sit for a fourth candidate interview with the editorial board of the local newspaper.

This resulted in a telling public exchange with the publisher. Apparently in a pique over Arp's victory, she wrote a column the night of the election in which it was wrongly claimed that the councilman had refused to meet with her. The next day, a correction acknowledged that she had forgotten a one-hour meeting only months before.

What the public knew of the reasoning behind Arp's positions was sadly limited to what his opponents might say about him. Most press and radio mentions were dismissive. A New York Times reporter came to town to profile Arp for a hit piece based on the presumption that his support for a day honoring the city's namesake demonstrated racism.

And because media coverage was so narrow and incomplete, Arp had to distribute the council's voting record himself for public analysis, an act that particularly riled the Republican members. And his data correlating campaign "pay to play" contributions with City Hall contracts . . . well, it was as irrefutable as it was disturbing to the mayor and the city's power brokers.

Arp's campaign had to overcome a poor performance at the top of the city ticket where the Republican candidate for mayor lost all but one precinct in Arp's district. All told, Arp won 25 of his 33 precincts (11 of 16 polling places) for a broad victory in a close race.

The win was impressive, perhaps because 10 years after the Cummins elections the three factors listed earlier had taken a stronger hold. Greater Fort Wayne poured nearly \$25,000 into the campaign of his primary opponent, later joining the Democratic contender in the general to help raise over \$70,000. The owner of a national retail company with special interests throughout the city and county, contributed \$5,000 against Arp in the primary and another \$7,500 in the general. A large investor in a multi-million-dollar downtown development put up \$12,500 against Arp in the primary and another \$1,000 in the general.

It is estimated that over \$100,000 (a 3:1 advantage) was spent by Arp challengers, believed to be a record for Indiana municipal district races.

Both of these men credit their wins to voters who when given a choice sided with individual liberty and private property rather than the crafted messages of council majorities, party chairmen and crony capitalists. Again, both men defined themselves not by posture but by sharp and sincere questioning — on the record, at the council table. There were no backroom deals.

More than all of that, they followed what we call the Schansberg Rules* — never vote for anything unconstitutional, unethical or impractical. That meant not voting for arrangements that favored certain citizens over

the rest, that used government to force what should be an individual choice and that supported a plan, however popular or high-minded, that simply would not work.

Please know that neither of these two men would tell you that they were political skilled, well-spoken or particularly charming in a public way. They did not relish standing before roomfuls of people. They weren't good at asking for money.

Rather, they approached the representation of their friends and neighbors as a duty rather than a profession. Again, they were effective independent of politics or the will of a council majority. They were unremarkable other than their willingness to get selflessly involved in the civic affairs of their community.

Please know that there are men and women like this in every Indiana city. Their time has come. They should not be waiting for permission or even an invitation. They should be putting their campaign together for the next city or district primary election.

** For a full description, see the June 7 "Outstater."*

Schansberg's Rules

(June 7) — I try not to let old books rule my outlook. But as I write tonight, I am listening to a recording of a local city council meeting and cannot shake a thought so incisive it has long survived its writer. It is an observation from Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged" through her enigmatic hero John Galt:

"When you see that in order to produce, you need to obtain permission from men who produce nothing. When you see that money is flowing to those who deal, not in goods, but in favors. When you see that men get richer by graft and by pull than by work, and your laws don't protect you against them, but protect them against you. When you see corruption being rewarded and honesty becoming a self-sacrifice. You may know that your society is doomed."

Although that paragraph painfully describes what was going on in council chambers, I don't concede that my Indiana city is doomed. I am convinced, though, that drastic remedial action is necessary.

It starts by voting a bunch of them out of office at the first opportunity. Their successors should be asked to demonstrate that they understand Rand's concern and would do their utmost to lead the city in a different direction.

And I have a suggestion as to which direction that might be. A friend has compiled three groups of questions that every councilman should ask before casting his or her first vote. Eric Schansberg, an adjunct scholar of our foundation, included them in a presentation he made to our membership some years back.

See if you don't agree that they go a long way toward getting us out of this woods in which we are so utterly lost:

1. Is the proposal consistent with the relevant constitution? If a proposal violates the constitution, then it is illegitimate and undermines the rule of law. If a constitution is illegitimate in some way, change the constitution, don't violate it.
2. Is the proposal an ethical use of force on people? When is it OK to have government force someone to do something or prevent them from doing it? Should I make it more difficult for you to work? Is it ethical for government to prevent people from smoking weed or eating too much pie? Is it moral for government to take your money and give it to poor people, wealthy farmers or businesses?
3. Is the proposal practical, will it actually work? Even if it's constitutional and ethical, if it won't work, then don't do it. The minimum wage is dubious on constitutional and ethical grounds. Practically, the law makes it more expensive to hire those with fewer skills. So, we make life more difficult for marginal people we're supposedly trying to help. We reduce their ability to earn money; we remove the dignity that comes with work; and we take away their best opportunities

to build skills and experience through work. How is that attractive — practically or ethically?”

There, problem solved. Don't try to thank me.

Is It Optional to Pay for Things?

“Every high civilization decays by forgetting obvious things.” — C.K. Chesterton

(June 5) — The staff of the Indianapolis Star, reduced as it is, has found time to devote dozens of hours and thousands of words to the city's food “deserts,” those areas unserved by commercial grocery stores. Star readers will learn little from the effort. The newspaper merely steers us to its foregone, unsupported conclusion: That a well-stocked, nearby grocery store is somewhere written into the Bill of Rights.

The editors have invented a new school of journalism to push the idea. It can be called the Resentment School, teaching young reporters how to collect emotive and envious notions from random people sincerely upset about a particular issue but ill informed as to what can be done about it.

Thus we hear the sad story of Sabae Martin who once could walk just 0.2 miles from her house on Capitol Avenue to the Seven-Eleven Supermarket, but now stands in an empty parking lot where the Standard Grocery once stood, across the street from the broken down building that housed her Seven-Eleven.

And we learn about food-access “inequity” and read headlines like, “We've Been Neglected for Years” and “Indianapolis Battles Food Deserts with New Food Division.”

That last refers to Mayor Joe Hogsett's plan to supplant capitalism in the “abandoned” areas with a combination of good intentions, grants, government aid and old-fashioned pumped-up moral superiority.

So far, according to the Star, Hogsett has spent or budgeted \$130,000 for a program providing rides to grocery stores, \$220,525 for a smart phone application to connect residents to food, \$195,000 in “food champion” grants to support residents who want to address food insecurity in

their neighborhoods and \$195,000 for a mobile grocery that offers fresh produce in different neighborhoods.

He may be just getting started. There is talk of treating groceries as the government has come to treat any politically desired commercial or real estate asset — baseball stadiums, convention centers, boutique hotels, etc. — by paying “investors” their profits up front for locating in the designated areas.

The problem is that these quasi-capitalists (“rent seekers,” to use the economic term) have only secondary incentives to serve customers, maintain or improve facilities. Their allegiance is to political patrons on the 25th Floor.

In sum, the Star never tests its assumption that food deserts are caused by racism inherent in the capitalist system, that entrepreneurs, black or white, are passing up easy profits in a wide-open food market out of spite.

That tells you it is time to put down what has become a silly newspaper and review the obvious.

Proponents of the mayor's programs define the food deserts in a way that shows them scattered throughout Marion County, as if population density plays no part, as if it is everybody's problem (and responsibility). But make no mistake the political dollars are focused on a loyal Democrat constituency in the inner-city neighborhoods.

Fifty-three years ago we made it flat illegal to deny credit to particular neighborhoods on a discriminatory basis. If racism were the cause of neighborhood differences, that and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 should have taken care of it.

But as it turns out, there were other causes, all ignored, chief among them being the socially and sometimes politically protected malfeasance of residents in the prescribed areas. “One reason is that crime, shoplifting, vandalism and riots have raised the costs, both directly and by causing insurance rates and the costs of security to be higher,” says the economist Thomas Sowell.

In the midst of the food deserts campaign, comes a vote by the Indianapolis Fraternal Order

of Police (FOP) declaring that the city is in a crisis of crime, violence and confidence.

“When was the last time you heard the mayor talk about locking somebody up?” asked the FOP president. “We don’t talk about that anymore, but here is the deal: Our politicians are playing government, they are out here playing ‘West Wing’ or ‘House of Cards’ while our evildoers are playing for keeps.”

Again, the Star sees no connection between crime and a decline in commerce. And yet there is the experience of San Francisco after passage of a woke referendum downgrading to a misdemeanor the theft of property less than \$950.

Walgreens there says that thefts at its stores are now four times the chain’s national average. As a result it closed 17 stores. And neighboring CVS says that the city has become “one of the epicenters of organized retail crime” and that it has scaled back its shoplifting enforcement because of the danger to the security force.

“I’m new to San Francisco,” a journalist quipped shortly after moving to the city. “Is it optional to pay for things here?”

In Indiana, the owner of the last locally owned inner city grocery store in my city said that shoplifting and employee theft had made it unprofitable to do business there. This was before it became unfashionable to say such things out loud.

Unfashionable or not, it deserves mention in a newspaper presuming to explain why grocery stores have left the inner city. Is there no data in Indianapolis comparing shoplifting and theft in the various areas (keeping in mind that a typical grocery store operates on a 1 to 2 percent profit margin)? Star readers aren’t given a clue. How many grocers are willing to enter a market where they are guaranteed to lose money in perpetuity? The Star has no idea.

And for all of the expense, aspersion and opprobrium, the yield promises to be zero. Sowell notes that the Department of Agriculture found no evidence of malnutrition among those in the

lowest income brackets. Nor was there any significant difference in the intake of vitamins, minerals or other nutrients from one income level to another.

“Ironically, the one demonstrable nutritional difference between the poor and others is that low-income women tend to be overweight more often than others,” Sowell concludes. “That may not seem like much to make a political issue from, but politicians and the media have created hysteria over less.”

All of that said, those living in the inner city of Indianapolis are good and loyal customers with whom any well-run business can make a profit. That their reputation is sullied by the actions of an errant few is not the fault of those choosing grocery locations. It is the fault of community leadership, most especially at City Hall and at the Indianapolis Star where supposed root causes and excuses, not solutions, make the headlines.

We all know that we must be good neighbors if we want good neighborhoods, and we must be good customers If we want fully stocked, nearby grocery stores — and “good” in both cases implies respect for the property of others.

There is no mayoral largess big enough to make up for that.

Guns Versus Behavior

Cause and effect, chain of events

All of the chaos makes perfect sense

When you’re spinnin’ round

Things come undone

Welcome to Earth, third rock from the Sun

— Joe Difie

(May 31) — Thinking about the political repercussions of an Indianapolis crime wave, a friend reminded me of a quite different catastrophe — the Chicago blizzard of 1978. My friend’s point was that such events contain absolutes that are resistant to even the most practiced political spin.

With the local weather stations having predicted two inches of snow, a blizzard with wind

gusts of 39 miles per hour dumped 21 inches in a two-day period beginning Jan. 13. Five people died, one when a snowplow driver went berserk, hitting 34 cars and ramming a man.

To add insult to the storm's injury, the Chicago Tribune printed a four-column aerial photo on its front page showing the first-day routes of the municipal plows, the very emblems of government rescue.

But in the Tribune's photograph the plows are heading not for the traffic ways but for the homes of high city officials.

This arrogance and selfishness, as much as the storm itself, enraged a snow-bound citizenry. It voted out Mayor Michael Bilandic, successor to Richard Daley, in an ill-timed February Democratic primary, eventually installing an outsider and the city's first woman mayor, Jane Byrne.

"Mayor Bilandic really didn't handle it correctly," Byrne told NPR years later. "He was saying everything's fine, and people were going around like what does he mean everything's fine? I can't get my car out, I can't, you know, go here, go there. I think it was more arrogance that irritated the people even more than the snow, and they were angry enough about the snow."

Again, a crime wave is not a snow storm. City officials can't control the weather. They can control crime. In fact, it is their duty.

Rick Snyder of the Indianapolis chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police predicts that this summer will be crime's "perfect storm." Homicides are already 40 percent above historic highs, the backlog of murder trials is approaching 200 and police recruitment is down at least 50 percent. Snyder frames the issue this way:

"Local politicians use the deaths of our neighbors, children and domestic-violence victims to call for more gun control but refuse to fix \$500 bond-auto release for repeat convicted felons charged with criminal recklessness while armed. Why?"

Good question, for the law is specific on that point: "A person who recklessly, knowingly or

intentionally performs an act that creates a substantial risk of bodily injury to another person" has committed criminal recklessness, a felony if committed while armed with a deadly weapon.

The behavior is the thing, you see, not the gun. And the law does not exempt that behavior because of political, racial or ethnic identity.

Since neither Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett nor Council President Vop Osili can be trusted to talk frankly about such a delicate issue, we will have to do some reverse engineering to get an answer.

Hogsett and Osie are skilled students in the school of Identity Politics. That is, when they look down at their city from the 25th floor they do not see individuals but rather groups, i.e., Meridian Street elites, Butler and I.U. intellectuals and, to the point of Officer Snyder's question, a loyal but struggling black constituency. Progressive politics is a matter of keeping all that in balance.

This works well up to a point. The elite receives assurance of its moral superiority over the hated conservatives. The inner-city constituency, or at least its nominal leadership, is activated by the injustice of perceived systemic racism.

But at some point it all crashes into an absolute. In this case, it is the Indianapolis crime rate, now comparable per capita to Chicago. For the situation eventually reaches the point where something must actually be done, where action must replace posture, where arrests must be made, where prosecution must be pursued. It is there that the progressive's political machinery grinds to a halt (can you spell "Portland?").

Identity Politics as well as campaign finances will not allow anybody to tell the Meridian Street elite that it is not morally superior, indeed that its devotion to victimology is killing fatherless errant youth and innocent bystanders, some of them children. And nobody will be able to tell the inner-city leadership that its thug wing must be held accountable for damage to life and property.

Thus police will be prohibited from stopping and frisking for weaponry, prosecutors will be

overwhelmed or dismissive, and those on the streets already charged for being armed and reckless will feel comfortable continuing to be armed and reckless.

A revolving door of mayhem, and no one at City Hall will say out loud what everyone knows to be true: Public safety has priority over political sensitivities.

Keep your eyes on the snow plows.

Why Is Holcomb in Israel?

(*May 25*) — As I write, our governor is winging his way to the Middle East on a visit that he believes will somehow advance the interests of Hoosiers.

Eric Holcomb's press release announcing the trip to Israel "at the invitation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu" included the customary disclaimer that no taxpayer funds will be used.

That may only mean that the trip cannot withstand taxpayer scrutiny. But let us assume that the governor is honest in his intent if only wishful in his promise. Let us assume Netanyahu is in need of his counsel, that this isn't just another summer vacation — a "junket" as they were known before they became routine.

You might remember that the governor's last such trip found him in China immediately before the pandemic accepting gifts from high officials of the Chinese Communist Party.

In any case, he is on the move again and I have begun a list of foreign ports that might provide more benefit for us poor zeks left behind here in Indiana.

Lima, Peru — Here the governor could meet with the economist Hernando de Soto Polar. This extraordinary man, the author of "The Mystery of Capital," is in demand by nations throughout the world advising them on how to . . . well, on how to become more like the United States before we forgot who we were.

De Soto's work focuses on the protection of private property and the honoring of contracts between individuals. "There is no such thing as an investment without property rights that are negotiable and transferable," he would tell our

Governor Holcomb who blithely canceled landlords during the Covid year. "The question is: do people own things in such a way that they can be brought into the global market and make us wealthier?"

Appenzell, Switzerland — Here, as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn so wonderfully described, the governing body meets but one day a year to block any harm the executive might be planning for the coming year. Its delegates, honoring tradition, arrive for the meeting wearing swords at their side. Here is Solzhenitsyn's summation of the day's events:

"Having unanimously re-elected their beloved Landammann (mayor), entrusting him with the formation of the kind of government he wanted, they immediately rejected all his major proposals. And now he is to govern. I had never seen or heard of such a democracy, and was filled with respect. This is the kind of democracy we could do with."

Gurgaon, India — This is a city that forgot to form a government. Gurgaon had a population of about 173,000 in 2001. Now it has nearly 1 million. The growth began in the 1950s when Delhi in its socialist heyday banned private real-state development. In reaction, a private company, Delhi Land and Finance, quietly bought cheap farm land south of Delhi, attracting developers by providing the services of the missing government (roads, sewage systems, public safety, fire departments, etc.).

"While Gurgaon isn't exactly crime free — the crime rate is on par with Phoenix, Arizona — it doesn't lack for protection," reports Todd Krainin of Reason Magazine. "There are 35,000 private security guards keep a watchful eye on the city, compared with only 3,000 public officers."

Krainin reports that once the land was converted from farmland to commercial use, it remained classified as rural and therefore pretty much unregulated due to the bureaucratic oversight. Thus Gurgaon ended up as a city without a city government:

When General Electric (once an Indiana mainstay, if Governor Holcomb has forgotten) moved into Gurgaon in the 1980s hundreds of multinationals followed. “Soon Gurgaon was generating middle class jobs by the hundreds of thousands. Today, it boasts an absurd 30 percent annual GDP growth and the third highest per-capital income in India,” says Krainin.

Hey, putting our man Holcomb in touch with Gurgaonian thinking might be worth a few taxpayer dollars. — *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