

Worries mount as state targets federal drug program

Providers warn that halting Medicaid 340B reimbursements could threaten care for low-income Hoosiers

BY **JARRED MEEKS**



UPDATE: After our press deadline, Audrey Frenzel, Indiana’s Medicaid director, sent *State Affairs* the following statement confirming the Braun administration’s intention to exempt Federally Qualified Health Centers from the proposed state plan amendment:

“The Family and Social Services Administration is carving out Federally Qualified Health Centers from Indiana’s new 340B policy to protect access to affordable medications for low-income Hoosiers. This decision is a direct reflection of Governor Mike Braun’s leadership and his clear direction that Indiana’s healthcare system must deliver high-quality care at a cost families can afford. The Governor has made it a priority to ensure that every taxpayer dollar is used



FSSA Secretary Mitch Roob on April 16, 2026. (Credit: Jarred Meeks)

responsibly and effectively, and this carve-out reinforces that commitment by supporting the essential community clinics that serve some of our most vulnerable neighbors.”

Lawmakers and health care providers continue to warn that a proposed state plan amendment could cripple hospitals’ and clinics’ ability to care for low-income Hoosiers. Still, the agency head pushing for the change says it is needed to safeguard against abuse.

The dispute is reaching a boiling point, with providers and lawmak-

CONTINUED ON PG. 4

Indiana GOP civil war fuels costly Senate races in the homestretch

BY **BRIAN A. HOWEY**



INDIANAPOLIS — As the [Indiana Republican Party civil war](#) enters its homestretch, big money (and small) pours into the seven races set off when the state Senate [rejected President](#)

CONTINUED ON PG. 2

Quote of the Week

“I cannot think of an industry less in need of tax incentives. AI is so problematic for so many reasons. Why would we also allow it to defund our public schools, health care and safety?”



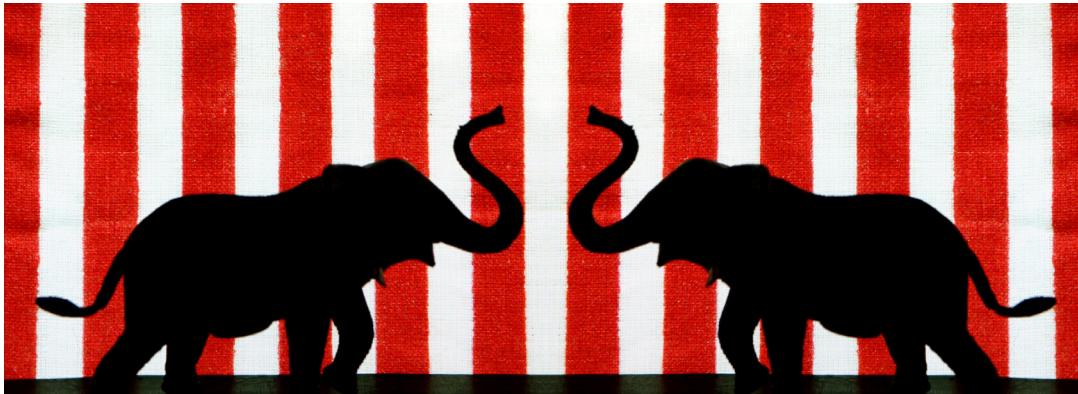
— **Greg LeRoy**, executive director of Good Jobs First, regarding [Indiana’s tax breaks for data centers housing artificial intelligence infrastructure](#)



Faster news

One app. No hassle. Just news.





(Credit: spxChrome via Getty Images Signature)

[Donald J. Trump's push to forge new congressional districts.](#)

The classic contrast comes in Senate District 23, where this battle is playing out. First-term Sen. Spencer Deery of West Lafayette raised more than \$500,000 and received \$179,000 from the Senate Majority Campaign Committee. He is receiving big bucks from groups such as the Indiana Association of Realtors. Deery is landing big checks from establishment Republicans like former Gov. Mitch Daniels, who contributed \$5,000.

Deery's opponent, Fountain County Republican Chair Paula Copenhaver, is on an insurgent footing, relying on tens of thousands of dark-money dollars from Club for Growth Action, Turning Point USA, the White House and political action committees affiliated with U.S. Sen. Jim Banks and Gov. Mike Braun.

Copenhaver has raised a mere \$15,220 (including \$5,000 from herself), spent \$10,752 and has a cash balance of \$4,293. She received \$1,041 from Carmel businessman Doug Rose and another \$250 from state Rep. Craig Haggard, R-Mooresville. But 336 pages of her pre-primary finance report are filled with mostly out-of-state donors, many giving just \$1 or \$2.

Since analyzing these races a week ago, I noticed that the Senate Majority Campaign Committee has entered two more races, pumping \$183,861 into Kokomo Sen. Jim Buck's campaign to fend off a challenge from Tipton County Commissioner Tracey Powell, as well as \$141,000 for Highland Sen. Dan Dernulc in his race against Trevor DeVries.

Of these seven civil war battles, the Senate Majority Campaign Committee has yet to allocate money to Sen. Travis Holdman's campaign — although the Markle Republican has been receiving checks from several Senate colleagues.

Here are race-by-race financial telltales and the candidates I believe have the advantage.

SD 23: In addition to landing the check from Daniels, Deery has received contributions from Mark Lubbers, Mike McDaniel, Mickey Mauer, Alan Hubbard, John Hammond III and Michael Berghoff. The senator has also received donations from current legislators Sue Glick, Jean Leising, Mark Genda and Mishler, as well as from former legislators Sue Scholer, Phil Boots, Sharon Negele and Brandt Hershman. Big checks have come from the Indiana Realtors (\$25,000), the Indiana Bank PAC (\$5,000), the Tippecanoe County Commissioners PAC (\$2,500), Hoosiers for Great Public

HOWEY POLITICS INDIANA

Alison Bethel

Chief Content Officer & Editor-in-Chief

Brandon Roberts

Managing Editor

Brian A. Howey

Opinion Columnist

bhowey2@gmail.com

Jarred Meeks

Statehouse Reporter

Subscriptions

HPI, HPI Daily Wire

sales@stateaffairs.com

Contact HPI

Email: bhowey2@gmail.com

Howey's cell: 317.506.0883

Business Office: 786.363.9990

Tips: tips@stateaffairs.com

© 2026, Howey Politics Indiana.

Jack E. Howey

Editor Emeritus | 1926-2019

Senate races, from page 2

Schools, and \$16,000 from Indiana Business for Responsive Government.

My take: The Senate Majority Campaign Committee has gone on the attack on Deery's behalf, running ads and sending out mailers about a past Copenhaver business deal. So this race appears to be a toss-up.

SD 38: Sen. Greg Goode of Terre Haute has raised \$630,398 and had a cash balance of \$119,732 on his pre-primary report. The Senate Majority Campaign Committee donated \$100,000 on March 30 and has spent more than \$200,000 for in-kind services in March and April. His two opponents — Vigo County Council member Brenda Wilson and [Alexandra Wilson](#) — have raised \$19,474 and \$499, respectively. Goode has received GOP establishment support from Bruce Melchert, Lou Gerig, Teresa Lubbers, Bob Grand, Troy Woodruff, Mauer, Hammond, Jeff Papa and Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness, as well as from former Congressman Ed Pease and former legislator Gerald Torr. Senate colleagues Leising, Mishler and Vaneta Beck contributed \$8,000. Goode has also received \$25,000 from Indiana Realtors, the Lawyers PAC of Indiana and Indiana Firefighters, and has received checks from unions, including the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers PAC, the Indiana Iron Workers, the Indiana State Pipe Traders and the Indiana Laborers District Council. Brenda Wilson received \$10,000 from the Indiana Merit Construction PAC, \$5,000 from Michael Baur and \$1,041 from Rose.

My take: This race leans toward Goode because of the two Wilsons in the challenger field. Bopp is prescient that the challenger field is a fatal flaw in this retribution effort. Plus, Brenda Wilson received some bad press from family sources.

SD 11: Sen. Linda Rogers of Granger has raised \$711,562, spent \$526,478 and had \$185,032 cash on her pre-primary report. She received \$100,000 from the Senate Majority Campaign Committee on March 30 and has received more than \$175,000 in in-kind services. She faces Granger physician Brian Schmutzler, who has loaned his campaign \$301,000 of the \$377,350 he has raised, including \$1,000 from The President Coalition. Rogers is landing big checks from Indiana Business for Responsive Government (\$15,000), Hoosiers for Great Public Schools (\$10,000), Hoosiers for Quality Education (\$5,000), Indiana BANKPAC (\$12,000), Indiana Realtors (\$25,000) and Indiana Multi Family Housing (\$10,000). Rogers has received checks from Daniels, Torr, McDaniel, Hammond, Mishawka Mayor Dave Wood, Jeff Rea, Tim Neese, Martha Walorski, Terry Rodino and Richard Pfeil. Colleague support has come from Leising, Mishler, Glick, Brian Buchanan and the Wesco Campaign Committee.

My take: Rogers is essentially facing a self-funder. Her contributions from several current and former mayors suggest wide local support. This race leans toward her.

SD 21: Buck began the cycle with \$40,201, has raised \$324,713 and has a cash balance of \$146,111. The Senate Majority Campaign Committee gave him \$50,000 on April 2 and has spent \$189,000 as of Tuesday. Powell began the year with \$23,776, raised another \$42,996 and had a balance of \$13,475. He received \$10,000 from Ward Stone Tipton Quarry, \$1,041 from Rose, \$1,000 from Woodruff, \$2,500 from Jody Pierce and \$2,000 from Terry Baker. Powell's pre-primary report was 375 pages, filled with hundreds of mostly out-of-state donors. He loaned his campaign \$20,000. Buck has received contributions from Torr, Hammond, former Secretary of State Ed Simcox, former Lt. Gov. John

Mutz, former Westfield Mayor Andy Cook, Jim Crews, Craig Dunn, Kokomo Mayor Tyler Moore, Luke Kenley, Kokomo Rep. Mike Karickhoff and Senate colleagues Mike Bohacek, Mishler, Glick, Stacey Donato, Leising, Becker and Kyle Walker. Buck received \$25,000 from Indiana Realtors, \$6,500 from Indiana BANKPAC, \$5,000 from Indiana Multi Family Housing and \$5,000 from the GM PAC.

My take: This is a toss-up race. Buck had announced he planned to retire, and after Powell launched his bid last summer, the senator changed his mind. The dark-money insurgency funders have launched an array of attack mailers and TV ads.

SD 41: Like Buck, Sen. Greg Walker had announced his retirement and then reversed course. State Rep. Michelle Davis announced her candidacy before he changed his mind. The senator from Columbus began with \$10,521, raised \$236,490 and had a cash balance of \$118,510 on his pre-primary report. The Senate Majority Campaign Committee gave him \$75,000 on April 16 and has spent nearly \$10,000 in in-kind services. Outgoing Sen. Eric Bassler, R-Washington, contributed \$25,000, as did the campaign committee of Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray, and \$10,000 from Mutz. Greg Walker has received checks from Senate colleagues Leising, Becker, Mishler, Crider, Bohacek, Glick, Kyle Walker and former Sens. Kenley, David Long and Chip Perfect. Greg Walker also received \$25,000 from Indiana Realtors, \$7,000 from the Indianapolis Chamber, \$5,000 from Plumbers and Pipefitters, \$5,000 from Indiana Multi Family Housing and \$1,000 from Cummins PAC, as well as donations from Mauer and Gretchen Gutman. Davis began the year with \$32,717, raised \$60,367 and had \$35,549 cash. Hoosiers for Quality Education and the Indiana Merit Construction

PAC each contributed \$10,000 to her. She has received support from Sen. Gary Byrne, Rep. Jack Jordan, Jeff Cardwell, Tony Samuel, Bopp, Rose, Jim Purucker, Chuck Goodrich and Charlie Hiltunen.

My take: At this point, this race feels like a toss-up after Walker reentered. He has resumed his door-to-door campaigning. Davis is receiving backing from U.S. Rep. Erin Houchin.

SD 1: This contest has seemed like a second-tier priority for the insurgents. Dernulc began the cycle with \$197,166, raised \$224,021 and had a cash balance of \$272,748. The Senate Majority Campaign Committee has spent \$141,000. Dernulc has received \$25,000 from Indiana Realtors, \$10,000 from Iron Workers Local 395, \$6,000 from Indiana BANKPAC, \$5,000 from Indiana Operators Joint Labor and \$3,000 from Indiana Multi Family Housing. Dernulc has received checks from Senate colleagues Leising and Mishler, as well as Hammond and Samuel. There was no financial report from DeVries on the state's elections website.

My take: This is a likely win for Dernulc.

SD 19: This challenge seemed tenuous from the beginning, with Trump announcing Bluffton Common Council member Blake Fiechter's candidacy a week before he did. Holdman began the cycle with \$437,874, raised \$672,224 and had a cash balance of \$317,301. The Senate Majority Campaign Committee has not played in this contest, which is a vivid telltale about its competitiveness. Fiechter has raised \$51,355 and has a cash balance of \$45,723. He received \$12,000 from BAF Investments and Urban Investments of Bluffton, plus \$5,000 from Michael Baur and \$5,000 from Robert Troxel. Fiechter loaned his campaign \$24,000. Holdman's

donors read like a power list: Columbia City Mayor Ryan Daniel, Carmel Mayor Sue Finkam, New Haven Mayor Steve McMichael, Hammond, Doden, Kenley, Jeff Espich, Hershman, John Stafford, Michael O'Connor, Purucker, Borrer Public Affairs, Senate colleagues Becker and Glick, and former Senate President Pro Tem David Long. Holdman received \$25,000 from the Indiana BANKPAC, \$25,000 from Indiana Realtors, \$10,000 from the Indiana Affordable Housing Council, \$20,000 from Indiana Multi Family Housing and \$11,000 from Indiana Business for Responsive Government.

My take: It would be shocking if Holdman weren't back at the Statehouse on Organization Day in November.

Brian A. Howey is an opinion columnist for State Affairs Indiana and the founder of Howey Politics Indiana. His writing offers analysis and opinion shaped by decades of experience covering Indiana politics. Email him at howey@stateaffairs.com.

MEDICAID, FROM PAGE 1

ers coalescing around a plea for Gov. Mike Braun's administration to at least exempt federally qualified health centers and similar operations from the planned overhaul.

What the proposed Medicaid change would do and how 340B works

Late last year, the Family and Social Services Administration received approval to amend Indiana's Medicaid State Plan to cease Medicaid reimbursement for drugs purchased under the federal 340B Drug Pricing Program. The changes are scheduled to take effect July 1 and would affect only the state's managed care programs, not its fee-for-service programs, FSSA Secretary Mitch Roob told the State Budget Committee in December.

The 340B program allows certain hospitals and clinics serving low-income and underserved populations to buy discounted outpatient drugs from manufacturers. The providers can then bill payers at a nondiscounted price, generating revenue.

The program's supporters say the savings are reinvested, as required, to improve providers' ability to serve members of under-resourced communities, subsidize uncompensated care and help offset prescription drug costs. However, at the national level, a battle over the program's future is underway, with states increasingly involved.

Drugmakers and some state officials have accused participating 340B providers of widespread abuse, whether by using the program to boost their profits or by "[double dipping](#)" in both Medicaid and 340B rebates. Roob, in particular, argues that the state must work to ensure providers aren't pocketing the savings from ballooning purchases under the 340B program.

"The 340B provider is acquiring that [drug] at a significant discount from what we are paying the health plans to fund," Roob told the budget committee. "The provider then provides the drug to the patient, and the provider then bills the managed care plan at the price of the drug in our capitated environment. So if we were paying \$80 for

the drug in the capitated program and the provider got it on 340B pricing for \$10, they would charge the managed care organization \$80. And they would be paid \$80, and they would keep the differential. ... We have no idea how those dollars are used at all.”

Roob’s worries follow a sharp growth in the size of the 340B program. According to [KFF](#), a health policy research organization, total drug purchases under the federal program grew to \$66.3 billion in 2023 from \$2.4 billion in 2005. And as of 2023, more than half the country’s pharmacies were contracted for 340B participants, according to the [Drug Channels Institute](#).

Last year, Indiana legislators passed a [law](#) requiring 340B program participants to submit certain information and transactions in annual reports — part of an effort to bring transparency into the space. Other states, including [Maine, Minnesota and Washington](#), have also enacted reporting requirements for 340B participants. The first of Indiana’s annual reports has yet to materialize, leaving some lawmakers, such as Rep. Ed Clere, R-New Albany, to question why the change is needed now. He told *State Affairs* he worries the state plan amendment could be “premature.”

Under FSSA’s proposal, the agency itself would alternatively seek manufacturer rebates through the Medicaid Drug Rebate Program for all covered outpatient drugs. Such a move would ensure “alignment with federal requirements” and support “consistent, transparent reimbursement across the pharmacy benefit,” FSSA said in a [February notice](#).

FSSA’s authority to make such a change was granted in 2025 by an eleventh-hour addition to the state budget bill, leaving no opportunity for public input before the measure was approved and signed into law,

much to health care providers’ chagrin.

The agency estimates Indiana’s proposal would produce \$63 million in combined federal and state savings annually. However, providers are adamant that no state dollars are spent on the 340B program and that any benefit to state coffers would not offset their lost savings. ([Senate Appropriations Committee](#) Chair Ryan Mishler has said the expected state savings were already baked into the state budget.)

The proposed state plan amendment would build off an [executive order](#) Gov. Mike Braun issued last year. The directive called for a report determining the Indiana Department of Health’s authority to enforce standards surrounding the program, including that duplicate discounts are not provided by manufacturers to a Medicaid rebate and a 340B discount on the same drug.

It also comes as FSSA, under Roob’s second tenure as agency leader, has embarked on a crusade to limit the growth of Indiana’s Medicaid spending. Roob’s stated goal is to [curtail the program’s growth to 2%](#) in the coming fiscal years.

Concerning the 340B program, Roob told the [Indiana Capital Chronicle](#) in a statement earlier this month that “no federal law guarantees hospitals the right to retain revenue derived from prescriptions funded by a taxpayer-supported program. The proposed State Plan Amendment ensures that savings associated with Medicaid beneficiaries remain within the Medicaid program.”

Khadija Butt, on behalf of Alliance for Integrity and Reform of 340B, told *State Affairs* in a statement that “Indiana’s proposal reflects growing state frustration with managing Medicaid budgets while large hospitals benefit from 340B discounts. Indiana’s actions also highlight the need for

federal reform to strengthen accountability, prevent duplicate discounts in Medicaid and ensure 340B savings are used to directly benefit patients in Indiana and nationwide.” Other states that have taken similar actions are [South Dakota, New Hampshire and Louisiana](#), according to Butt.

Providers warn of harm while FSSA defends proposal

Since the announcement, critics have lambasted the plan. During an April 14 Medicaid Advisory Committee meeting, several elected officials and health care providers rallied against the proposal, saying that, at a minimum, the state should exempt federally qualified health centers from the planned changes. Sen. Fady Qaddoura, D-Indianapolis, a member of the committee, voiced concerns about the proposal, saying it could lead to tens of millions of dollars being lost or diverted from the centers.

“I’ll be fiercely opposed to any policy that would jeopardize the health of our patients across the state of Indiana at a time when the state is projected to be sitting upon \$5 billion of surplus,” Qaddoura said. “I find it extremely difficult to jeopardize a program so that FSSA can gain ... at the expense of patients.”

Alan Witchey, president and CEO of the Damien Center in Indianapolis, which serves thousands of Hoosiers living with HIV and AIDS, warned that statewide viral suppression rates would dramatically decline if federal 340B funding were blocked.

“In our clinic, we have a 94% viral suppression rate, and we’re doing that because of the 340B funding,” Witchey said. “That funding allows us to provide all kinds of support to our medical patients to help them be adherent to their medications, and when they’re virally suppressed, they

cannot pass the virus on to anyone else.”

The Indiana Primary Health Care Association’s CEO, Ben Harvey, also called for federally qualified health centers to be exempted, saying Ohio had approved such a carveout in 2024 while going through a similar process.

Yet, despite the impassioned pleas, FSSA officials did not indicate a change of stance during the meeting.

“Indiana will continue to support the federal 340B program for providers; however, Indiana Medicaid will no longer reimburse for 340[B] drugs,” an FSSA spokesperson said in an April 15 statement to *State Affairs*. “Providers will still be able to leverage 340B savings for non-Medicaid prescriptions.

“This change ... enhances prudent stewardship of public resources, saving the state of Indiana \$20 million. It ensures fiscal integrity within the Medicaid program with savings being reinvested into Medicaid to better serve Hoosiers who rely on these services.”

Asked whether the agency is still proceeding with a July 1 implementation date, the spokesperson said FSSA “continues to consider feedback received from stakeholders.”

Scott Tittle, president of the Indiana Hospital Association, told *State Affairs* in a statement that his organization is “very concerned” by the state’s proposal.

“Importantly, the 340B drug pricing program is a federal initiative that uses no state taxpayer dollars,” Tittle said. “Savings come directly from pharmaceutical companies and are reinvested by hospitals into essential services like behavioral health, cancer care, obstetrics, and support for uninsured patients, and are subject to strict federal oversight.

“Shifting these funds away from providers jeopardizes access to care, particularly for vulnerable Hoosiers, and could increase costs across the health system.”

Contact Jarred Meeks on X [@jarredsmeeks](#) or email him at jmeeks@stateaffairs.com.

From Ernie Pyle to Iran, a clash over truth in wartime reporting

BY BRIAN A. HOWEY



INDIANAPOLIS – United States Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth compared American journalists to “Pharisees” in our coverage of the Iran war, adding, “Sometimes it’s hard to figure out what side some of you are actually on.” U.S. Sen. Jim Banks, R-Ind., posted on X on April 14 that “Democrats and the media are rooting against the Commander in Chief and the mission they are carrying out.”

To quote the iconic hit man Jules Winnfield from the 1994 classic movie “Pulp Fiction”: “Allow me to retort.”

While many journalists of my era were attracted to the profession by *Washington Post* Watergate reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the legendary Hoosier war correspondent and columnist [Ernie Pyle](#) has always been my polaris. He attended Indiana University. When my father became editor-in-chief of the *Indiana Daily Student* during its quonset hut era, he worked at Pyle’s old desk.

Historian Ray E. Boomhower observed in a 2017 article, “Pyle’s column offered a foxhole view of the struggle as he reported on the life, and sometimes death, of the average combatant.” It was Pyle who wrote, “There are no atheists in the foxhole.”

Pyle arrived at Omaha Beach a day after the 1944 D-Day invasion. In his first column, he observed, “I took a walk along the historic coast of Normandy in the country of France. It was a lovely day for strolling along the seashore. Men were sleeping on the sand, some of them sleeping forever. Men were floating in the water, but they didn’t know they were in the water, for they were dead.”

Pyle wrote about walking through the eerie silence of pockmarked, body-strewn battlefields after the fighting had moved on. He reported about pilots, generals and quartermasters, but his affinity was for the self-described “God-damned infantry.”

“I love the infantry because they are the underdogs,” Pyle wrote from Tunisia in May 1943. “They are the mud-rain-frost-and-wind boys. They have no comforts, and they even learn to live without the necessities. And in the end, they are the guys that wars can’t be won without.”



A mortar crew in a foxhole in Bougainville, France, on March 10, 1944. (Credit: U.S. Army Signal Corps Archive)

Following in Pyle's footsteps were waves of journalists who revealed the brutal truths about our leaders of war. *New York Times* reporter Neil Sheehan's 1988 Pulitzer Prize-winning book "A Bright Shining Lie" exposed the corrupt and incompetent commands of the American and South Vietnamese militaries and their inability to adapt to a popular guerrilla movement.

When reporter David Halberstam was denied battlefield access, he observed, "The reason given is security. This is, of course, stupid, naive, and indeed insulting to the patriotism and intelligence of every American newspaperman, and every American newspaper represented here."

There was the 2003 Errol Morris documentary, "The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons From the Life of Robert S. McNamara."

McNamara describes Lesson No. 8, which states that even though the United States is the strongest nation in the world, it should never use that power unilaterally.

"If we can't persuade nations with comparable values of the merit of our cause, we'd better reexamine our reasoning."

These three journalists exposed the lies and duplicity of the American White House and military. President Lyndon Johnson was told from the beginning that the Vietnam

War was unwinnable, but the U.S. spent more than a decade trying, costing the lives of 58,000 American troops and millions of Vietnamese.

Last Thursday, Hegseth told journalists during a press briefing, "I just can't help but notice the endless stream of garbage, the relentlessly negative coverage you cannot resist peddling, despite the historic and important success of this effort and the success of our troops."

There is no doubt about the American military's tactical brilliance and dominance in Iran. What is missing is the matching strategic acumen.

Just like Russian President Vladimir Putin, who believed Ukraine would collapse only days after his 2022 invasion, President Donald J. Trump thought he could sack Tehran just as he had Venezuela in a matter of days. He didn't believe the mullahs would [close the Strait of Hormuz](#), which is the most war-gamed scenario at the Pentagon and think tanks across the globe. Putin and Trump are now grappling with asymmetrical drone warfare, which didn't exist in 2022.

When Trump announced a ceasefire last Friday, Ron Filipkowski of MeidasTouch noted that the president posted 13 times in an hour, claiming "total victory." He posited that Iranian leaders had "agreed to every-

thing," including the removal of its enriched uranium, and that "Iran has agreed never to close the Strait of Hormuz again."

Friday night on Air Force One, Trump said of Iran's nuclear program: "We're taking it. We're taking it. Very simple. We're taking it. With Iran. We're going in with Iran. We're taking it. We will have it. I don't call it boots on the ground. We'll take it after the agreement is signed."

On Saturday, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps ordered the attack on two tankers near the Strait of Hormuz, closing it once more.

Our tactical military brilliance is betrayed by a serious lack of judgment and strategic foresight in the White House and Pentagon, while Congress has been missing in action.

The Wall Street Journal published an article Saturday titled "Behind Trump's Public Bravado on the War, He Grapples With His Own Fears." We learned that during the rescue mission for two downed pilots during Easter weekend, aides kept the president out of the room as they got minute-by-minute updates because they believed his impatience wouldn't be helpful. The newspaper reported that Trump is pondering giving himself the Medal of Honor.

Pyle, too, knew the limits of American power and leadership.

"It's all right to have a good opinion of yourself," Pyle explained, "but we Americans are so smug with our cockiness, we somehow feel that just because we are Americans, we can whip our weight in wildcats."

Pyle wrote of the "God-damned infantry" that would be needed in tens of thousands of numbers to defeat and secure a nation: "In their eyes as they pass is not hatred, not

Wartime reporting, from page 7

excitement, not despair, not the tonic of their victory — there is just the simple expression of being here as though they had been here doing this forever, and nothing else.”

As American journalists, we need to report and reflect on the lives of American soldiers, as well as our leaders who could put them in harm’s way.

While visiting the D-Day battlefield and American cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach, researching Hoosier soldiers, sailors and airmen who made the ultimate sacrifice, I came across a plaque with this inscription: “In memory of General Dwight D. Eisenhower and the forces under his command, this sealed capsule containing news reports of the June 6, 1944 Normandy landings is placed here by the newsmen who were here.” It is dated June 6, 1969.

When a sniper’s bullet killed Pyle on Iejima on April 18, 1945, he had an unfiled column in his pocket, intended to celebrate the end of the war in Europe.

“It is to the boys who were my friends for so long,” Pyle wrote. “My one regret of the war is that I was not with them when it ended. For the companionship of two and a half years of death and misery is a spouse that tolerates no divorce.

“Such companionship finally becomes a part of one’s soul, and it cannot be obliterated.”

Brian A. Howey is an opinion columnist for *State Affairs Indiana* and the founder of *Howey Politics Indiana*. His writing offers analysis and opinion shaped by decades of experience covering Indiana politics. Email him at howey@stateaffairs.com.



Donald Trump at CPAC in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 10, 2011. (Credit: Gage Skidmore)

two or more times in a single day.

This frenetic and unpredictable behavior suited the president in two ways. First, it gave many supporters the impression that he was negotiating tariffs with other countries. That wasn’t really happening, but it fit his self-made TV image as a savvy negotiator.

Second, it allowed his supporters to claim that economists were wrong about their forecasts. Of course, economists were right about the tariff effects — that’s why he TACOed.

As predicted, U.S. job growth effectively stopped, the unemployment rate rose, manufacturing shed more than 70,000 jobs, real wage growth turned negative and prices began a deep and lasting increase.

The Consumer Price Index in April 2025 was 2.3%, a level that seemed certain to lead to Fed rate cuts and lower mortgage rates. Twelve months later, it spiked to 3.3% — before the effects of the Iran war began to bite. It’s going to get worse.

The Federal Reserve is more likely to raise rates this year than lower them because of the tariffs. Indeed, the only thing likely to result in an interest rate cut this year is a recession, but it would take a deep one to do so. Slow growth with higher prices is much more likely and the stagflation prediction looks prescient.

Trump's tariff TACO: Economy on the brink

BY MICHAEL J. HICKS



MUNCIE, Ind. — It’s been a full year since [President Donald Trump made his first big cuts to his tariffs](#). In many ways, the president is flailing to undo the economic damage caused by his policies. The incessant TACOing is the trademark of his presidency.

Trump announced a large suite of illegal tariffs in April 2025. They amounted to more than a tenfold tax increase on imported goods. Many economists provided sobering estimates of the effect of these tariffs on our domestic economy.

Financial markets ruptured. The bond market, which is where the U.S. government finances its deficit and services more than \$30 trillion in outstanding debt, viewed Trump’s tariffs as an economic catastrophe.

But Trump always chickens out, and the TACO was born. He delayed the tariffs by 90 days on April 9, consoling both the bond and stock markets. Over the next several months, he made hundreds of changes to tariffs, sometimes changing rates on the same country

Tariffs aren't the only cause of TACOing. Trump's habit of chickening out stems from a clear chain of behaviors. The process is remarkably consistent.

First, install unqualified officials into important positions (think Peter Navarro, Kristi Noem, Pam Bondi and Pete Hegseth) and ensure they purge their offices of expertise. Second, find a problem that requires deep expertise: imposing tariffs, fighting Iran, enforcing laws or deporting immigrants living in the country illegally or who commit crimes. Third, implement unworkable, and often illegal, policies. Fourth, face the consequences and TACO.

The so-called Department of Government Efficiency, the brainchild of Elon Musk and some 20-something tech guys, cost the government more money than it saved. Trump had to discard Musk and his goons.

Agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection swarmed Minneapolis — a place with a low-immigrant population — to make a political point against progressive cities. That surge of untrained agents led to the fatal shooting of two peaceful protesters. Trump turned to his hallmark TACO by firing Homeland Security Secretary Noem, who had overseen the Minneapolis operation.

Release the Epstein files? Trump ordered Bondi to do so and then fired her for failing to dampen the outrage over the administration's failure to release all of them.

Trump attacked Iran without any contingency for the most likely set of responses — ballistic missile and drone attacks on allies and U.S. troops, along with [the closure of the Strait of Hormuz](#). The results have been ground casualties 10 times the Desert Storm rate, attacks on every major

Persian Gulf ally and volatile oil prices.

Trump has tried to TACO his way out of Iran with ridiculous threats and a ceasefire. But unlike tariffs or deportations or the Epstein files, the decision to end this war is not his alone. In war, the bad guys always get a vote — and, yes, Iran is most definitely one of the bad guys.

The entire Trump presidency will now be consumed by his TACOing, or dealing with mistakes of which he is the sole author.

Only a few Americans would've paid attention to the Epstein files if it weren't for Trump using them for a bogus electoral advantage. Almost no one wanted heavy tariffs on consumer goods, particularly knowing that American families would bear 90% or more of the costs. We all want a more efficient government, but not the firing of experts. Outside of Christian nationalists and other hate groups, no one wants mass deportations, at least not including the 95% of immigrants without legal status who've not been charged with criminal acts. Every sober and thoughtful American would welcome the end of the Iranian regime.

The problem is, in all of these cases, there is no real plan, ideology, focus or intellectual construct — just whim.

For those whims, Trump will spend the remainder of his presidency facing the consequences of epically bad decisions. We are in a period of rising prices, slow growth, an imminent recession, a grim war and broad legal jeopardy for many in the Trump circles.

These challenges seem likely to consume White House policy efforts for the next two years.

Michael J. Hicks, Ph.D., is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University. Contact him at cberdirector@bsu.edu.

A State Fair: Beautiful day, broken systems and locked deodorant

BY MORTON J. MARCUS



INDIANAPOLIS — Today is one of those glorious early spring days. There, that's the news. By the time you read this news, it may be a different world. Chilly, windy, with gray skies and more foolishness from the White House and Congress.

Today, the talk is about conversations among adversaries. But who those adversaries are may change by the time these words reach you. Our national likes and dislikes are

as transitory as a toddler's preferences.

Despite what Forrest Gump's mama might have said about a box of chocolates, life is not a stochastic model with random inputs.

On this beautiful day, I drove downtown for a 10 a.m. appointment. The number of potholes outnumbered the human population by 20 to 1. So empty were the streets that I thought The Bomb had been dropped and I had missed the sirens' screeching.

I drove straight into a parking spot next to the state Capitol. Plenty of spaces available. The parking meter was a new model, and I could not get it to record my credit card and my desire for an hour's worth of time.

Some will declare this was additional evidence that people of my vintage should not be driving or parking. I will counter: The machine was defective or, at a minimum, the instructions were inadequate.

With self-assurance, I parked and rehearsed my presentation to the judge about the city's failure to secure a vendor with communication skills.

As I sat at the foot of my statue on the Capitol's east side (it bears my name in tribute to a Civil War-era governor), I thought

about the building behind me, the seat of our state government.

Once upon a time, in days now forgotten, just after the buffalo left the scene of our state seal, I visited many people of little and much consequence in that building. Back then, I would just walk in and roam about, from the hidden rooms of the lower levels to the hideaways in the uppermost warrens of the top floor.

But no longer.

Today, security is enforced. Every citizen is a suspect with evil intent and cleverly disguised armaments. And paranoia is not an exclusive malady of the Hoosier State. It is found in both small and large towns throughout America.

In upstate New York, yea verily, beyond Rochester, I required a sanitary facility and presented myself to a guard at the door of a charming county courthouse. He understood my need and guided me to a convenience located outside the imposing machine that stood ready to examine me, my clothes and all articles in my possession.

In Des Moines, Iowa, an airport ubermeister called the city police when I indiscreetly questioned the necessity of removing my shoes, my belt, my jacket and the con-

tents of my trouser pockets.

All that is necessary for new security indignities is a single event somewhere in the world. At what cost is all this security? Why does the airport in Kearney, Nebraska, require two guards, on duty from dawn to dusk, for the arrival and departure of the two flights each day that connect to the Denver airport?

I anticipate a moat to be built around the Indianapolis City-County Building, patrolled by specially trained alligators, to deter citizens who question the sanity and sobriety of the elected officials housed in that structure.

And I haven't yet mentioned my pharmacy, where deodorant is protected in shatter-proof, locked cases to foil the unwashed.

Yes, it's a beautiful day in a dysfunctional world.

Morton J. Marcus is a research economist formerly with Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. Contact him at mortonjmarcus@gmail.com. Listen to him and John Guy on the podcast "Who Gets What?" at mortonjohn.libsyn.com.



- Push notifications for breaking news
- Instant alerts when your tracked bills change status
- Real-time updates when your keywords appear in legislation or news
- One-tap access to the latest news
- Legislative directories and schedules at your fingertips

