

INDIANA POLICY

Review

Fall 2026



Tenny School

Revisiting the 50-Student School

Let's Try Boosting Classroom Learning
and Doubling Teacher Pay

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.



Vol. 37, No.4, Fall 2026

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 all 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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charles S. Quilhot

Byron S. Lamm

T. Craig Ladwig

The Indiana Policy Review foundation is a nonprofit Indiana corporation, established in January of 1989 and recognized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Its officers and staff can be reached at: PO Box 5166, Fort Wayne, 46895; director@inpolicy.org or under the "Contact Us" tab at www.inpolicy.org. The foundation is free of outside control by any individual, organization or group. It exists solely to conduct and distribute research on Indiana issues. Nothing written here is to be construed as reflecting the views of the Indiana Policy Review foundation itself or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before the legislature or to further any political campaign.

From the South Wall.....	4
The Mocking Generations	4
The 50-Student Reinking School.....	6
Let's Try Boosting Classroom Learning and Doubling Teacher Pay.....	6
How to Fix the Hospitals.....	15
A Limited, Market-Preserving Reform to Indiana's 'Hospital Exception'	15
How to Fix the U.S. House	20
James Madison Would Expand it to 6,000 Members	20
Franke.....	27
The End of Reading	27
Summer Parades	28
Our Revolutionary War Vet	29
The Declaration Parchment.....	30
The Pledge of Allegiance.....	31
Insanity Defense.....	32
Eichenberger	34
Meritocracy.....	34
Common Sense	35
The Entitlement Trap	37
The West's Suicide Pact	39
The Linguistic Assault on Reality	40
A Definition of Men, Women	42
Father's Day	44
The Victim Mentality.....	45
Schansberg	48
Capital Gains and Inflation.....	48
Gaski.....	49
Yes, the Communists Can Win.....	49
The Bookshelf.....	51
The Rise and Fall of Rational Control: The History of Modern Political Philosophy	51
The Coming Storm: Power, Conflicts, and Warnings from History	52
National Treasure: How the Declaration of Independence Made America.....	54
The Outstater	58
In Defense of ALPR Cameras.....	58
Public 'Service' Understood	59
Head Start Never Worked	59
Custer's Vindication and More	60
Conspiracy or Stupidity, You Choose.....	61
Writing for Clicks	62
America: An Idea or Just a Place?	63
Our Government Grocery Store.....	63
Indiana's Law School Quotas.....	63
Women Journos Under Stress.....	64
Hooray for Rokita, Braun.....	66
Indiana's Muslim Test.....	66
Civilizing our 'Youths'	67
Not a Traitor Exactly.....	68
Common Sense Catches Up	68
Speed (Variance) Kills.....	68
A Murder Most Random	69
The Fraud of Official Art.....	70

From the South Wall

The Mocking Generations

To know the road ahead, ask those coming back.
— Chinese proverb

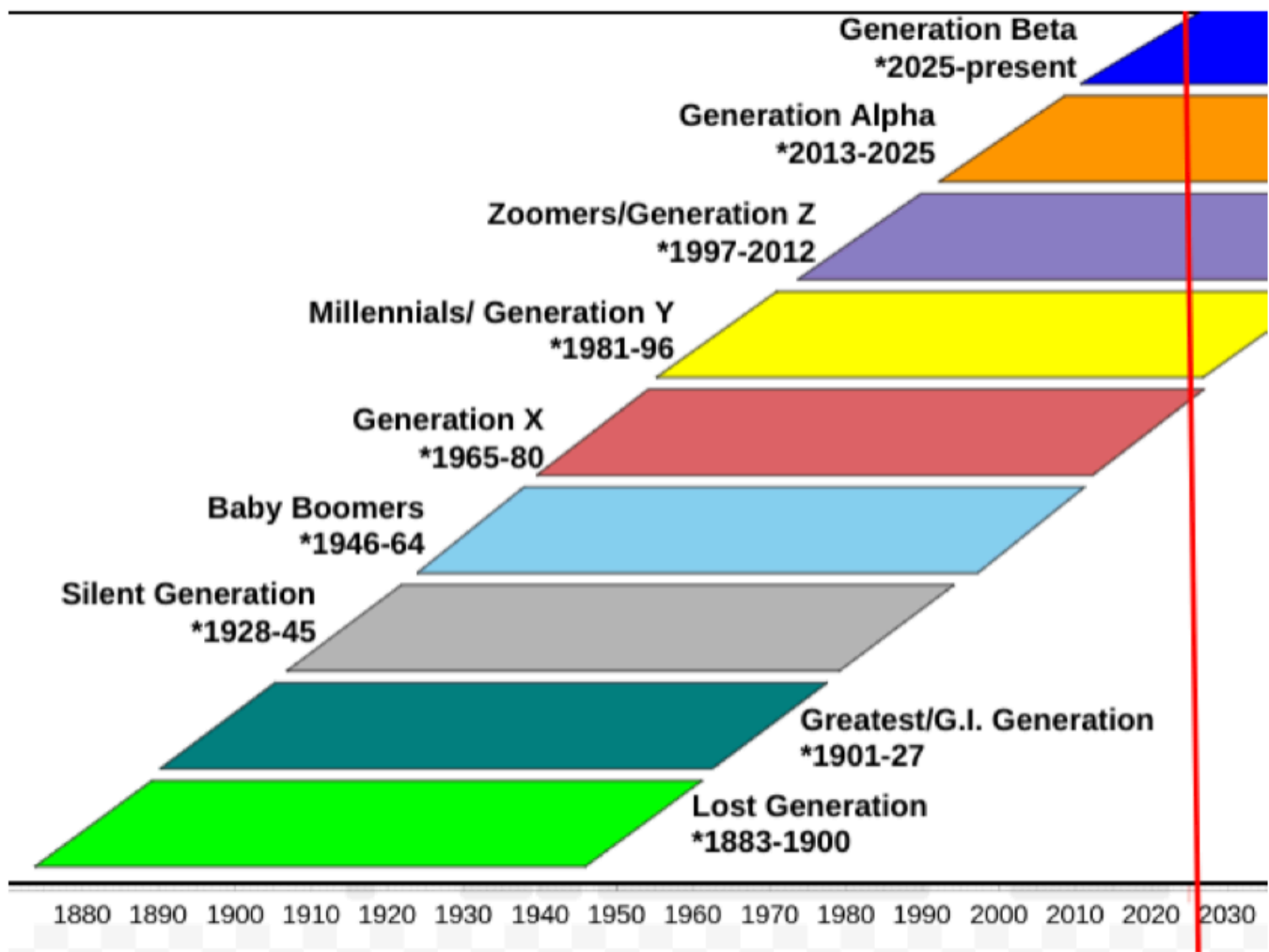
I am writing this at the approach of the season for high-school reunions. The thought occurs: Could there be one class year that holds the key to unlocking our current travail?

My vote is the class of 1963, those born at the tail end of World War II, one that has little in common with the others that will gather this fall to relive old times. It is said only half joking that its members are the last survivors of an alien civilization.

This is not exceptionalism, it is cohort analysis. These octogenarians carry a dire warning for society at large, one which I will sound in a minute. For now, though, the experience is captured romantically in Larry McMurtry's classic "The Last Picture Show" or even George Lucas's "American Graffiti" — cultural markers that flew by in a blink.

First, the demographics. Those born in 1945, the last year of the so-call Silent Generation, are demonstrably different from those born even a year later — more so than the difference between those born, say, in 1950 and those born in 1955.

There are obvious reasons. They belong to the first generation of Americans smaller than the previous one, and they were markedly fewer than those born even a year later. Births jumped from



about 2.9 million in 1945 to 3.4 million in 1946 (a historic 20 percent increase) and then to 3.8 million in 1947, remaining elevated for nearly two decades afterward.

And it is not just the numbers. They were born into wartime conditions (rationing, national uncertainty, paternal absence). They had classmates being raised by single mothers, their fathers killed in combat. It seemed that every neighborhood had an elderly couple left childless by the war.

Today, intra-generational heterogeneity is widely acknowledged (Millennials, Generation Z, etc.). But the more stark contrast between the 1945 Silents and the 1946 Boomers is not. My assistant Grok has gathered key distinctions:

- *Life experiences differed drastically in the timing and degree of internalization to civil rights, the counterculture and early feminism.*
- *This more often than other generations had older parental models, mothers and fathers who had delayed childbearing due to Depression and war.*
- *The most profound change perhaps was the sexual revolution, and how widely available birth control affected how young women chose a mate.*
- *The timing of education and labor-force entry also differed. They didn't begin to learn to read until first grade compared with pre-school today. It wasn't uncommon for them to hold down an adult-level jobs as early as age 14.*
- *Marriage/divorce patterns and health/mortality trends, good and bad, showed a sharp break after 1945.*

All of this may explain something else — something we dare not dismiss as old-fogeyism: It is that those in the class of 1963 may have been the last to hold their elders in respect. Well, at least they didn't outright mock them (let us count the SNL skits as testimony to the reverse).

This is the characteristic that I find most troubling: Subsequent generations do not take seriously much of what happened before they were born. That includes the cruel lessons of Communism and Islam, the heroism of the American frontier, the dynamics of the Christian nuclear family, complementary roles for the two

sexes, the global context of slavery, the enrichment of reading a book, the economics (private property and equal opportunity) of Western Civilization, the moral complexity of the Civil War and much more.

Sadly, the only history that seems to stick is that which denigrates other generations, including and especially the founding one (Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, never forget). The irony, though, is that aging Boomers cannot now claim to be surprised that they themselves are reviled, in their case for being “privileged.”

I hope I am wrong about all of this, my perspective distorted by the pessimism of age. But if not, it bodes ill for escaping the situation in which we find ourselves. Amnesia makes for poor national policy. — *tcl*

The 50-Student Reinking School

Let's Try Boosting Classroom Learning and Doubling Teacher Pay

Keagen Combs, a Decatur native, is a research assistant at the Indiana Policy Review foundation and a junior at Wabash College majoring in philosophy, politics and economics. Combs is a brother of Phi Kappa Psi and a student senate representative.



"If one were to seek deliberately to devise a system of recruiting and paying teachers calculated to repel the imaginative and daring to attract the mediocre and uninspiring, he could hardly do better than imitate the system of requiring teaching certificates and enforcing standard salary structures that has developed in the largest city and statewide systems. The alternative system would resolve these problems and permit competition to be effective in rewarding merit and attracting ability to teaching."

— Milton Friedman,
"Capitalism and Freedom (1962)"

Great teachers remain overworked, underpaid and in great demand. Not only this, but many teachers are pessimistic about the future of education.¹ Education reform has always been a hot topic but educational tools have changed since 2003 when the foundation's late Ronald Reinking outlined his educational system and the form of education has shifted. Reinking's argument has been ignored by many, as it is

daunting. However, his argument has merit and demands a closer look applying the tools of modern technology. Here we build on Reinking's 2003 framework in which he argued that better technology and infrastructure for small private schools were essential for student learning and more efficient spending. This article adds two main points: 1) AI educational tools and 2) doubling teacher pay. The foundation's updated system, through a small student population, meaningful use of AI, a focus on education and educational spending, delivers four key points:

1. Doubling teacher pay.
2. Enhanced individual learning.
3. Greater efficiency for teachers.
4. A meaningful surplus of funds for long-term sustainability and reinvestment.

The Reinking Model

First, let us recap what Reinking proposed and how that system applies today. Reinking created a school with roughly 50 students, partnering with a church or other organization that would support occupancy for this school (real estate, janitorial services, telephone and internet capabilities). This school depends on school volunteers (parents, guardians, or others who recognize the system's strength), smaller staffing and technology-assisted education. In 2003, his system cost \$27 per pupil per week while government school spending was over \$150 per pupil per week.² It is important to establish the assumptions that Reinking maintained as well. Reinking knew that this project would need a strong community backing and trust, a partnership with an institution that believed in the school, no sports programs, heavy dedication to education and entrepreneurial teachers.

The updated system uses the same assumptions. This school system may not work everywhere but it is a strong alternative for careful consideration by any community. Finally, in 2003 Reinking did not have a wide variety of sources and research that the foundation now has with the Internet. Additionally, he lacked AI tutoring tools,

adaptive learning platforms and student monitoring technology. But Reinking did see the new technologies’ strengths and how important it is for students to learn them and thrive. Now it is 2026 and this article will carry on these ideas with more powerful instruments, showing that recent technologies and a stronger system can provide better learning outcomes.

The Specifics

As Reinking laid out, starting a private school requires an extensive budget. This budget shows four core drivers in educational cost: staffing, startup funding, donations and contributions technology. These four key items will be elaborated upon in this section.

First, here are the basics of the school’s budget using per-pupil spending costs. In 2025, Indiana spent \$13,622 annually per pupil.³ In this system of 50 students, this gives us \$681,100 to work with. The foundation’s model spends a little over \$545,000, giving us a surplus of over \$135,000.

For more background, the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program (the main voucher program in Indiana) provides students with state-funded money to attend certain private

schools. In the 2024-2025 school year, this program’s average scholarship amount was \$6,536.29,⁴ which would certainly help families with costs. For each general cost on the worksheet in the appendix (advertising, meetings and conferences, supplies, etc.), the foundation has used Reinking’s 2003 numbers and adjusted them for inflation. This was done using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers in 2003 versus 2026 to find an inflation factor. The 2003 CPI was 184;⁵ in April 2026 the CPI is 333.020.⁶ By dividing the April 2026 CPI by the 2003 CPI, the inflation factor is 1.81. Using this inflation factor, the foundation has neatly updated the cost of general items that a school system must have to start and sustain operations. Now that these

general costs are updated, let us move on to staffing.

Staffing is where this system differs most from Reinking’s and others’ thoughts. This system employs five staff members: the headmaster, a full-time teacher, a learning specialist, a Tech & AI integration specialist and an administrative assistant. Often, other schools have many students and a small staff-to-student ratio. This system flips this, allowing more highly skilled staff per student. The headmaster would serve as the school’s leader, overseeing administrative matters and teaching students. This position is most important, as it requires expertise across many areas, including education, technology and more. The full-time teacher is self-explanatory, as he or she would focus on 40 hours a week of in-class learning with the students. In Indiana, an average teacher makes around \$58,000 a year.⁷ The foundation’s system pays the headmaster \$135,000, while the full-time teacher is paid \$120,000. These salaries are more than double

what the average teacher makes in Indiana. One may ask, “Why double the teachers’ salaries? This seems inefficient for budgeting.” However, increasing teacher pay can

lead to a twofold success: 1) Teachers would have stronger incentives to push their students and their own curriculum, as there is no better pay in Indiana for this position; and 2) teachers would be encouraged to have entrepreneurial skills that further the school and protect their positions.

To support teachers, more staff are essential for this system. The Learning Specialist would ensure the correct curriculum and learning paths for students. The Tech & AI Integration Specialist would oversee everything technological. Their role would be fundamental in setting up the technology and AI platforms but also sustaining these tools. The Administrative Assistant would take care of infrastructural needs, marketing, billing and bookkeeping. To round out the team,

Refer to cost worksheet in the Appendix. Addition spreadsheets are available on request.

there would be a contracted school nurse, therapist, special instructor and part-time teacher's aides. Note that many school systems, private and public, cannot afford to solve children's mental health issues. The foundation's school system strives to help its students cost-free if they are struggling in this regard.

It is important to note that volunteers would also be beneficial to this team, but the foundation does not rely on them for its budget. However, with a strong volunteer group, certain budget lines (school nurse, teachers aides, etc.) could be removed entirely, as volunteers could command these positions. Also, volunteers could have additional positions later such as sports coach or foreign-language teacher. Starting a private school is expensive, so capital funding is important. Currently, there are technology grants for schools, big and small. These can help fund our system's technology startup and operation.

Computerization in schools has become more affordable since 2003. This budget plans for \$68,765, which provides each student with a personal laptop for schooling. Additionally, staff get laptops for work purposes. This number also includes projectors, displays, Chrome OS management licenses, accessories, charging carts, setup and more. This budget item is a strong candidate for grants (which could be written by the headmaster or a volunteer administrator) and does not need tuition dollars or other revenue sources. Once this technology is set up, it has low operating costs per year, which could be taken from the miscellaneous costs section,

In-kind contributions support infrastructure costs within this school budget. It is assumed that this private school would merge with another organization such as a church. Therefore, as Reinking envisioned, it would be zero cost for real estate, utilities and janitorial service.⁸ These costs are included in the technology budget, as 50 students may overload an Internet system in a smaller church or organization. This cost would be covered by the grant mentioned above. We assume a strong partnership with an organization

is realistic, as it is the same arrangement many private church schools now use to operate at a lower cost.

If a school cannot find a partnership, then occupancy costs would have to be incorporated, shrinking the surplus. Also note that this system is not locked into in-person learning. That is, the same budget with minor changes would support a hybrid model, splitting time between in-person learning at the partner site and remote instruction, or even as a fully online program where no physical partner is available or if remote works better for some students. The right format depends on the community and opportunities around the model, as the school can adjust to different patron demands.

Unlike in 2003, computers are now the platforms for student learning. Almost all students in K-12 public schools have their own devices, whether laptops or tablets. Many school systems use online platforms to teach. Teachers routinely have students submit assignments online.

In this system, the technology is enhanced, enabling new AI tools to be implemented. The operating costs for these AI tools, including Khanmigo, Grammarly, IXL, Amira and ChatGPT (for staff use only, e.g., research and drafting) and a Google Education Plus subscription, cost \$6,508. This amounts to around \$130 per student per year. These tools cover adaptive tutoring, reading intervention, math diagnostics, teacher planning tools and staff writing support.

The outlook and benefits of these tools will be addressed later in this article. For now, it is important to note that these AI tools are cost effective and could be the driving factor behind this school's success.

Beyond budget line items, the school's structure strives for low costs and a focused mission. The school's organization would rely on the 50-student base, although there is clear room to grow if successful. Again, the school's mission would focus on academics with little or no sports programs. Parents could create club sports teams

and advance those extracurricular activities as demand dictated. As the school matures, additional programs (band, sports, art, etc.) could be added the same way any product enters the market, that is, understand the demand and willingness to pay for it. Over time, the school should adjust to what it is best at and then market to those to interested families. There is even an opportunity for families to sign up specifically for band or sports while not attending the school, allowing more opportunities for home-schooled or remote-learning students. Central to this mission is a strong commitment to individualized learning where all students learn the same material but learn at their own pace. An example mission statement may look like this

“The school’s goal is to deliver a rigorous and individualized education, where all students advance at their own mastery pace. The foundation’s school system dedicates itself to the highest level of education for all students. All students will be respected in all areas and guided to perform to their best ability. The school will give students a strong and safe community that will help them grow their critical thinking skills, morals and professional skill set.”

Scholarships and grants can be provided to parents as resources permit. Parents could also seek sponsorships for their children to reduce tuition costs. Although tuition may seem high, there are avenues available to lower these costs to families.

The school’s governance is intentionally lean and uncomplicated, ensuring low overhead governance for staff and students while still providing input. The foundation’s system would have around five board members with technical skills to monitor how the school is performing on all fronts. The headmaster would ensure that board members are informed and check in with them regularly. Communication and agreement with board members about responsibilities and tasks is necessary as with any governing body. Budgeting is an art, not a science. However, a strong effort has been made to assign the most

precise costs estimates possible. By talking to professionals, specialists and researching extensively on trusted websites, the Foundation has committed itself to a strong educational budget.

Doubling Teacher Pay

Teacher quality impacts student education more than any other factor. In 2014, Raj Chetty, John Friedman and Jonah Rockoff used school district data on over a million children and found that students assigned to high-value-added teachers are more likely to attend college and earn higher salaries.⁹ The higher the value added, the more a student improves in their overall lives. Again, the teacher in the room is the most important in-school variable in a child’s education. Yet, as Friedman noted in 1962, the profession is structured to repel the imaginative and daring and reward uniformity instead.

As previously stated, the average teacher in Indiana makes \$58,620.¹⁰ The profession, as currently structured, does not offer a meaningful difference between its best and worst. This is a problem that Friedman identified over 60 years ago. When salaries are so uniform, there is little financial incentive for a teacher to go beyond the minimum effort. The best teachers have different incentives to work hard (dedication, personal beliefs, etc.) but the current system is not rewarding those teachers who meaningfully care about their students. A salary increase allows the school to differentiate the best-performing teachers.

The foundation’s system offers double the average teacher pay in Indiana. The headmaster earns \$135,000 and the full-time teacher earns \$120,000. Higher compensation at this level changes two things simultaneously: It strengthens teachers’ abilities and it changes the daily incentives of teachers when inside the classroom. This higher compensation can attract the most effective teachers with the strongest resumes. Not only this, but the higher salary will retain these teachers, ensuring that the school has a strong organizational foundation.

Teachers will be at the forefront of advertising, demonstrating in personal terms that students here have strong opportunities, both now and in the future. This higher compensation, along with a well-designed school, changes daily incentives for teachers to encourage the best possible guidance for students and parents.

Enhanced Individual Learning: AI Tools Implementation

In 2003, Reinking said that computerization in education would allow children to “advance independently and individually at their own pace” and teachers can “have continuous monitoring of student progress.”¹¹

Now, with AI tools, these benefits are increased, as they have only become cheaper, stronger and more specific over time. There is a stack of six tools and one infrastructure subscription to ensure each tool has a clear purpose. This way, instructors and staff are not bogged down by the number of tools available (there are many out there). These tools were chosen because they enable human-led use and progress in important categories of school curricula. They include:

- *Google Education Plus Subscription*: core school platform, \$6 a year per student, allows access to Google apps, such as Gmail, Drive, Docs and Classroom. Google Classroom will serve as the school’s main platform, where students can access assignments and information from teachers. Additionally, Google provides security and student content filters to uphold strong educational use and safety.¹²
- *Khanmigo*: \$44 per student per year, Khan Academy’s guided AI tutor that leads and educates students towards answers, rather than supplying them instantly.¹³
- *IXL & Amira*: around \$1,850 per year, adaptive platforms that give diagnostics for math and language arts.^{14, 15}
- *Brisk Teaching*: a free AI planning tool for teachers.¹⁶
- *Grammarly for Education*: \$144 per year for five staff members, for writing quality and staff

communication.¹⁷

- *ChatGPT Business*: \$240 per staff member per year, for staff research, drafting and administrative work.¹⁸

There may be concerns that the school is overly reliant on AI platforms and tools. Although these concerns may be valid for normal school systems, this school is committed to accurately and effectively using AI for the benefit of individual students. First, it is important to note that this system should be human-led and students should not just be placed in front of a screen for eight hours. Progress does not come directly from computers. The process would be interactive, with the teacher ensuring that students stay on track while learning carefully curated information. This can be done through quizzes and lectures outside of AI instruction. Secondly, students would have opportunities to get away from technology through music, physical education and other hands-on learning. Computer-free time is essential in this program, as students should not be staring at a screen all day.

That understood, the Learning Specialist on staff would be responsible for ensuring that students are on the right track by reviewing their progress on AI platforms. The specialist could schedule meetings with students and parents to discuss specific academic progress. Research on AI tools in K-12 is still developing. A Stanford review published this year showed that only 20 articles on AI implementation in K-12 contain strong causal evidence.¹⁹ Given this, AI tools should not be oversold as the best possible tools for all students.

Nonetheless, it is important to watch the direction in which education and AI tools are heading. In EdChoice’s Spring 2026 survey, 40 percent of teachers believed schools should change their teaching to match the future with AI.²⁰ A good portion of teachers, the people with the most experience in the classroom, seem to agree that AI tools are coming and can change the way students learn. In Stanford’s 2026 AI Review

in K-12, researchers found significant benefits, i.e., students experienced immediate gains and a short-term boost that can later foster positive learning experiences. Teachers gained improved efficiency and the ability to scale expertise.²¹

Along with this, a case study found that teachers using ChatGPT spent 30 percent less time on lesson and resource preparation with no detectable differences in quality.²² Teachers can save time and use it to improve other areas of teaching. To summarize, AI tools can be used to improve students' and teachers' effectiveness and efficiency although this implementation must be done correctly.

To limit the potential negatives of these tools, this system has three key action points.

1. Before the AI tools are put into use, staff and students will be trained on this technology. This includes workshop sessions with all staff, separate sessions for students, self-paced modules for effective AI use for staff and even AI certifications for the Tech & AI Integration Specialist if needed. This initial process ensures that everyone understands the limitations and benefits of AI.

2. Families will receive a clear summary of every tool the school uses, how each tool handles student data and how educational support from AI differs from merely giving students rote answers. Ensuring that families trust the school is essential when starting a new school system.

3. Both the Learning Specialist and AI Integration Specialist will oversee students' use of these tools to ensure proper operation. Monitoring will focus on how students are receiving their answers (e.g., not fully engaging with the answer), security issues and whether students are effectively communicating with these AI tools. These guardrails in place, the tools described above become what they are intended to be: instruments in the hands of skilled teachers and curious students. AI tools should not be substitutes for either.

The foundation's school infrastructure removes the obstacles that prevent good teachers from spending time on effective instruction. Again, a lean school structure and effective AI platforms promote an improved curriculum. A Gallup poll in 2025 found that teachers who use AI tools weekly save around six weeks of work per year, recaptured from lesson planning, resource preparation and administrative tasks.²³ In a system where teachers are already well-compensated and operating without bureaucratic overhead, those six weeks are reinvested directly into students. With a dedicated Tech & AI Integration Specialist, ensuring that the staff uses these tools correctly, the efficiency gains are real and the quality of instruction does not suffer. Teachers with strong entrepreneurial skills are encouraged. The foundation assumes teachers who see themselves as growing the school and reinvest their time into the school and themselves. A smaller student base, combined with data from IXL, Amira Khanmigo, lets teachers move students forward and catch students falling behind. When a well-paid teacher has effective tools, efficiency is a natural result.

Budget Surplus

The final pillar of this school is what remains after annual costs: the surplus. As mentioned before, this model costs around \$545,000 per year (costs may go down after the first year of startup). Using Indiana's annual cost per pupil of \$13,622 for 50 students equals \$681,100, which leaves us with over \$135,000. As Reinking insisted in 2003, the foundation's system must be self-funding and run like a business. Consumers will pay for the product of a strong education and suppliers will provide that education without hesitation. As Reinking said, "Direct payment for goods and services forms a bond of expectation and delivery that all of us experience daily."²⁴ Additionally, volunteers could grow this surplus, as they perform the actions included in the budget. It is hoped that donations will increase the budget surplus.

Donations are incentivized in Indiana, as Indiana allows people to receive 50 percent tax credit for their donations to SGOs (scholarship granting organizations) with no limit on how much a donor can contribute.²⁵ Additionally, the new Education Freedom Tax Credit allows for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for up to \$1,700 per individual taxpayer when they contribute to an SGO.²⁶ There are incentives for supporters to give both big and small donations to help create a budget surplus throughout the school's lifespan.

Now, with this business model and tax credits in mind, the opportunity for surplus is strong. It will allow for reserves, absorb unexpected costs and help fund the school's next phase of growth as well as provide scholarships for students. The surplus is insurance that a school can pay its teachers what they are worth, equip its students with the correct tools to learn and still operate with the financial discipline that any sustainable institution requires. In a sector where per-pupil costs continue to climb year after year, it is a direct challenge to the assumption that better education is unaffordable.

Conclusion

The system should not be taken as a cure-all for America's educational problems. This model has clear assumptions about schooling and the supporting community that differ from public schools. The foundation also acknowledges that the AI base is still developing and requires responsible implementation. Additional research is needed, especially causal studies of AI tools in K-12 settings and real-world pilots of this staffing and funding model. However, an AI-savvy school can achieve significant improvements in education.

To recap, the foundation's model allows for doubling teachers' pay, enhanced individual learning, higher teacher efficiency and a meaningful budget surplus. These do not have to be dreams of educational leadership; they are available now with modern tools and cost

management. Reinking showed in 2003 that a smarter, leaner school was possible. His argument was ignored. Now, in 2026, we can conclude as Reinking did: "Good people, good settings, a morally healthy environment, the best of high-tech equipment at the lowest cost possible — these are the ingredients of success for a school. Just do it."²⁷ ♦

Endnotes

¹ EdChoice & Morning Consult. (n.d.). Teachers and K-12 Education: Spring 2026. <https://www.edchoice.org/research/teachers-and-k-12-education-spring-2026/>

² Reinking, R. (2003). Are government schools still necessary? *Indiana Policy Review*. Spring 2003.

³ World Population Review. (n.d.). *Per Pupil Spending by State 2026*. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/per-pupil-spending-by-state>

⁴ Indiana Choice. (n.d.). FAQs: Indiana Choice Scholarships. <https://indianachoice.org/faq/>

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2004, January 15). *Consumer price index: December 2003* (USD-04-29). U.S. Department of Labor. https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/cpi_01152004.pdf

⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2026, May 12). *Consumer price index: April 2026* (USD-26-0721). U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cpi.pdf>

⁷ *Indiana Teacher Salary and Benefits Guide*. (2025, October 5). Teachers of Tomorrow. Retrieved June 3, 2026, from <https://www.teachersoftomorrow.org/blog/insights/indiana-teacher-salary-and-benefits-guide/>

⁸ Reinking, Are government schools still necessary?

⁹ Chetty, R., Friedman, J. & Rockoff, J. (2014). *Measuring the Impacts of Teachers II: Teacher*

Value Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood. *American Economic Review*, 104(9), 2633-2679. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/aer.104.9.2633>

¹⁰ *Indiana Teacher Salary and Benefits Guide*. (2025, October 5). Teachers of Tomorrow. Retrieved June 3, 2026, from <https://www.teachersoftomorrow.org/blog/insights/indiana-teacher-salary-and-benefits-guide/> ¹¹ Reinking, Are government schools still necessary?, p. 38

¹² Google. (n.d.). *Education plus edition*. Google for Education. https://edu.google.com/intl/ALL_us/workspace-for-education/editions/education-plus/

¹³ *Khanmigo for learners: Always-available tutor, powered by ai*. Khanmigo for learners: Always-available tutor, powered by AI. (n.d.). <https://www.khanmigo.ai/learners>

¹⁴ *IXL: Math, Language Arts, science, Social Studies Spanish*. IXL Learning. (n.d.). <https://www.ixl.com/>

¹⁵ *AI for teachers and educators*. Amira. (n.d.). <https://amiralearning.com/>

¹⁶ *Free AI tools for teachers and educators – brisk teaching*. Free AI Tools for Teachers and Educators – Brisk Teaching. (n.d.). <https://www.briskteaching.com/>

¹⁷ *Grammarly for Education*. Grammarly. (n.d.). <https://www.grammarly.com/edu>

¹⁸ ChatGPT Business. (n.d.). <https://chatgpt.com/business/>

¹⁹ Fesler, L., Martinez, J., Agnew, C., & Loeb, S. (2026). *The Evidence Base on AI in K-12: A 2026 Review*. AI Hub for Education of the SCALE Initiative, Stanford University. <https://scale.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/The percent20Evidence percent20Base percent20on percent20AI percent20in percent20K-12 percent20Report.pdf>

²⁰ EdChoice & Morning Consult. (n.d.). Teachers and K-12 Education: Spring 2026. <https://>

www.edchoice.org/research/teachers-and-k-12-education-spring-2026/

²¹ Fesler, L., Martinez, J., Agnew, C., & Loeb, S. (2026). *The Evidence Base on AI in K-12: A 2026 Review*. AI Hub for Education of the SCALE Initiative, Stanford University. <https://scale.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/The percent20Evidence percent20Base percent20on percent20AI percent20in percent20K-12 percent20Report.pdf>

²² Roy, P., Poet, H., Staunton, R., Aston, K., & Thomas, D. (2024). ChatGPT in lesson preparation: A teacher choices trial (Evaluation Report). National foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

²³ Ash, A. M. (2025, June 25). *Three in 10 Teachers Use AI Weekly, Saving Six Weeks a Year*. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/691967/three-teachers-weekly-saving-six-weeks-year.aspx>

²⁴ Reinking, Are government schools still necessary?, p. 35

²⁵ EdChoice. (n.d.). *Indiana School Scholarship Tax Credit*. <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/programs/indiana-school-scholarship-tax-credit/>

²⁶ EdChoice. (n.d.). Federal Tax Credit for Scholarships. <https://www.edchoice.org/federal-tax-credit-for-scholarships/>

²⁷ Reinking, Are government schools still necessary?, p. 4

Appendix: cost worksheet

Item	Cost (2003)	Cost (2026)
Staffing		
Headmaster	\$ 42,400.00	\$ 135,000.00
1 Full Time Teacher	N/A	\$ 120,000.00
Teacher's aides	\$ 4,680.00	\$ 8,320.00
Learning Specialist	N/A	\$ 55,000.00
Tech & AI Integration Specialist	N/A	\$ 54,600.00
Administrative Assistant	N/A	\$ 21,000.00
Specials Instructor	N/A	\$ 12,000.00
Therapist	N/A	\$ 12,000.00
School Nurse	N/A	\$ 8,000.00
AI/technology training for staff	N/A	\$ 3,250.00
AI Tools & Subscriptions		
Google Education Plus Subscription	55 students & staff x \$6 per year	\$ 330.00
ChatGPT Business Subscription	\$240 a year x 5 staff	\$ 1,200.00
Khan Academy's Khanmigo	55 x \$44 per year	\$ 2,420.00
Grammarly for Education	\$144 a year x 5 staff	\$ 720.00
IXL (Math Platform)	Classroom license: \$369 for 25 students x 2	\$ 738.00
Amira	\$20 per student x 55 students	\$ 1,100.00
Brisk Teaching	FREE for teachers	\$ -
Occupancy		
Leasing of space	In-kind contribution	In-kind contribution
Utilities	In-kind contribution	In-kind contribution
Telephone, internet capabilities	In-kind contribution	In-kind contribution
Cleaning supplies, janitorial services	In-kind contribution	In-kind contribution
Other General and Admin Services		
Student activities and field trips	N/A	\$ 4,500.00
Advertising, promotional materials	\$ 500.00	\$ 904.95
Insurance costs (general liability, property, car, employment, etc.)	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 12,000.00
Insurance costs, group health	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 20,000.00
Full-time staff benefits	N/A	\$ 65,000.00
Legal, professional fees	In-kind contribution	In-kind contribution
Maintenance, repairs	In-kind contribution	In-kind contribution
Meetings, conferences	\$ 250.00	\$ 452.48
Professional, technical education	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,809.90
Postage, printing	\$ 500.00	\$ 904.95
Supplies	\$ 500.00	\$ 904.95
Other miscellaneous and sundry costs	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
Administration costs	In-kind contribution	In-kind contribution
Equipment and Capital Costs		
Laptop/desktop computers	Funded by grants	Funded by grants
Total Estimated Costs	\$ 70,632.00	\$ 545,155.23
Per Pupil Cost, annually	\$ 1,413.00	\$ 10,903.10
Per Pupil Cost, weekly	\$ 27.00	\$ 209.68
Indiana Per Pupil Cost		
Indiana Per Pupil Cost	N/A	\$ 13,622.00
My School's Cost using the Government Number	N/A	\$ 681,100.00
Difference bwt My Cost v. Avg Per Pupil Cost	N/A	\$ 135,944.78

Item	Assumption	Estimated Cost
Student Chromebooks	50 × \$500	\$ 25,000.00
Spare/replacement Chromebooks	5 × \$500	\$ 2,500.00
Staff/admin laptops	5 × \$700	\$ 3,500.00
Classroom projectors/displays	2 x \$1250 + 2 x \$1500	\$ 5,500.00
ChromeOS management licenses	55 × \$38	\$ 2,090.00
Cases, headphones, chargers, accessories	55 × \$125	\$ 6,875.00
Charging carts/storage	2 carts (30 devices each)	\$ 3,500.00
Printer/scanner/copier setup	Shared school device	\$ 1,000.00
Network equipment and cabling	Router, switches, access points	\$ 10,000.00
Setup/enrollment/consulting	Initial IT setup	\$ 5,000.00
Business internet service	\$150 per month x 12	\$ 1,800.00
Student safety software	Web filtering software	\$ 2,000.00
Estimated technology startup total		\$ 68,765.00

How to Fix the Hospitals

A Limited, Market-Preserving Reform to Indiana's 'Hospital Exception'¹

Ritish Kodali is a Finance student at Indiana University Bloomington's Kelley School of Business and an intern at Indiana Policy Review Foundation. He is specializing in the intersection of healthcare policy and finance.



Indiana's hospital employment framework has contributed to a highly concentrated healthcare market in which four major systems held a combined market share of approximately 42.6 percent as of 2024.

Traditional forms of vertical integration such as hospital systems' acquisition of physician practices have been a key driver of this consolidation. Vertical integration can weaken physicians' professional autonomy, reduce competition from smaller practices and limit patient choice. Indiana enforces the corporate practice of medicine doctrine under Indiana Code § 25-22.5-8-1, which prevents lay entities from practicing medicine or directly employing physicians. However, Indiana law permits entities such as hospitals to employ physicians, provided that they do not interfere with physicians' clinical decision-making (Indiana Code § 25-22.5-1-2).

Indiana's current legal framework provides only limited enforcement of this doctrine, leaving a loophole that large hospital systems can exploit to interfere indirectly with physicians' clinical judgment. By relying on Indiana's legal exemption while imposing revenue targets, hospitals may effectively sidestep the state's prohibition on the corporate practice of medicine. It is therefore important to examine how these metrics can undermine physician autonomy and how other states, specifically Texas, offer a stronger path forward.

The CPOM Doctrine and Its Flawed Exception

The CPOM doctrine, currently practiced in approximately 33 states across the U. S., exists to protect the doctor-patient relationship, preserve physicians' professional judgment and prevent non-physician administrators from controlling the private practice of medicine. Corporate employers frequently employ indirect methods to control physician judgment through productivity metrics, relative value units and revenue generation targets. By exploiting these indirect metrics, corporate employers are able to make it more difficult for governing bodies to hold them accountable for violating the law. Indiana's existing statute prohibits this corporate interference but the exception carved out for hospitals is undermining the intent as these entities employ profit-focused techniques to control their physicians' judgment.

Indiana Code § 25-22.5-1-2 lies at the heart of this statutory failure as it permits hospitals to employ doctors as long as they do not direct medical decisions. In practice, this statute effectively assumes that as long as a corporate executive is not standing in an exam room dictating procedure, the physician maintains their autonomy. The statute, however, provides little guidance regarding when the use of financial incentives becomes unlawful interference with clinical autonomy.

Past studies have indicated that these economic pressures are a reality. A 2022 study of physician organizations that were affiliated with 22 different American health systems found that volume-based incentives impacted compensation in 83.9 percent of primary care organizations and 93.3 percent of specialist organizations. In those cases where patient volume contributed to primary-care compensation, it accounted for more than two-thirds of physician pay on average. Additionally, leaders at 70 percent of the organizations identified an increase in service volume as the primary way physicians could get higher compensation. These types of arrangements do not directly order a physician to recommend a particular medical procedure but still compromises their judgment by tying their salary to billables that benefit the employing hospital system.²

Research has also found supporting evidence in Indiana. A 2024 article from the Guardian detailed an investigation into Parkview Health, one of Indiana's largest hospital systems, and discovered that managers similarly evaluated physicians using revenue-based performance metrics and then tied bonus compensation to patient volume.

The investigation also uncovered that physicians that did not meet financial targets were discussed in management meetings with former employees describing pressure to encourage higher-revenue

services. These allegations do not definitively prove that Parkview Health has violated Indiana's Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine but they demonstrate that modern hospital systems can influence physicians through financial incentives rather than explicitly dictating clinical decisions. These practices illustrate the indirect corporate influence that Indiana's hospital exception leaves quite difficult to identify and enforce.

These findings collectively demonstrate that modern hospital systems do not need to directly instruct physicians to influence clinical decision-making. Instead, compensation structures and productivity metrics can exert pressure while remaining difficult to distinguish between regular business management. Indiana's hospital exception recognizes physician autonomy but provides limited standards for determining when indirect corporate methods become unlawful interference. This gap in enforcement is what distinguishes Indiana from other states that have stronger mechanisms to protect clinical autonomy.

Looking Beyond Indiana

Indiana's Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine accurately recognizes the importance of preserving the independence of physicians, but its hospital exception provides a limited enforcement structure for ensuring that autonomy is actually

maintained. Texas offers a more clearly defined and limited approach that centers around physician governance, enforceable contractual protections and specific statutory standards. This approach limits government discretion by identifying prohibited conduct in advance rather

than relying on retroactive regulatory enforcement.

Texas conditions physician employment arrangements on statutory safeguards that preserve a physician's independent judgment. Rather than allowing hospital employers broad authority to employ physicians, Texas

requires organizations that employ physicians to

place medical decision-making under physician leadership. Texas permits physician employment through medical board certified nonprofit health organizations, which must be governed by physicians licensed by the Texas Medical Board, as outlined in Texas Occupations Code § 162.001(b). This structure of governance reflects an approach that is fundamentally different from Indiana's. Instead of assuming that physician autonomy will naturally exist within a hospital system, Texas embeds physician oversight into the employer's structure. By giving clinical decision-making authority to licensed physicians, Texas creates a clearer separation between business and the practice of medicine, making corporate interference far more difficult.

Furthermore, Texas recognizes that corporate interference rarely occurs through explicit direction but rather through indirect methods. Texas Occupations Code §§ 162.0021–162.0024 requires nonprofit health organizations to adopt written policies that preserve physician autonomy in areas such as credentialing, quality assurance and utilization/peer review. These provisions also prohibit organizations from disciplining physicians for advocating for patient care and prohibit employers from requiring physicians to waive statutory protections through employment contracts. Unlike Indiana's hospital exception that broadly prohibits corporate interference without

Unlike Indiana's hospital exception that broadly prohibits corporate interference without identifying the ways by which it could potentially occur, Texas regulates administrative processes by which hospitals can exert influence over physicians.

identifying the ways by which it could potentially occur, Texas regulates administrative processes by which hospitals can exert influence over physicians. The written policies that Texas's statute requires preserve physician autonomy and in doing so, Texas establishes clear standards for distinguishing legitimate business from unlawful corporate interference.

Texas's framework places primary responsibility for compliance on the employing organization rather than requiring continuous government management of hospital operations. Texas's law requires certified nonprofit health organizations to submit biennial reports to the Texas Medical Board and ensure that physician directors certify compliance with statutory independence. The Texas Medical Board can investigate complaints, enact penalties and even revoke the hospital's certification if they do not comply with these obligations as outlined in Texas Occupations Code §§ 162.003–162.006. This framework represents one of the most staunch differences between Texas and Indiana. Rather than broadly outlining in statute that corporations cannot control clinical decisions, Texas assigns responsibility to the employer's leadership. Hospital executives and physician directors are required to maintain compliance, report violations and remain subject to continuous oversight by the Texas Medical Board. In contrast, Indiana's statutory exception has no comparable reporting requirements which makes indirect corporate interference far more difficult to detect and enforce.³

Texas's approach demonstrates that physicians employed by hospitals can still maintain their autonomy. Even Texas's limited hospital employment exceptions require qualified hospitals to appoint a chief medical officer and establish physician approved independence policies. They also have to report compromises of independence to the Texas Medical Board as well. Their approach proves that the major issue with corporate employers influencing physician judgment is not hospital employment, but rather Indiana's weaker statute. The stark contrast between the two states suggests that Indiana's Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine could be strengthened without eliminating the existing hospital employment exception.

Reforming Indiana's 'Hospital Exception'

Indiana should preserve the hospital employment exception but condition it on safeguards that preserve physician autonomy. Any reform should be narrowly tailored, preserve freedom of contract and avoid authorizing state officials to second guess ordinary clinical decisions. Texas did not eliminate hospital employment of physicians. Rather, it strengthened its existing corporate practice of medicine doctrine by conditioning physician employment on physician governance, written independence policies, complaint procedures and reporting requirements. Texas lawmakers expanded these protections through Senate Bill 1661 and House Bill 1532 after they determined that general prohibition against interference was not enough to preserve clinical autonomy. Indiana similarly does not need to prohibit hospitals from employing physicians to strengthen its Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine. The state legislature should instead make access to hospital employment similarly contingent on compliance with statutory safeguards as outlined by Texas's codes to preserve clinical judgment. This contingency would strengthen the alignment between Indiana's law and the original purpose of the Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine.

Indiana should also mandate that hospitals employing physicians adopt written policies that state that physicians will be independent. These corporate policies would also include clauses that distinguish between legitimate corporate management and improper control over clinical judgment. These policies, already in effect in Texas, reserve authority over medical decisions to physicians while allowing hospitals to continue managing administration. Requiring written physician independence policies would establish measurable standards by which hospitals could be evaluated. By clearly defining the administrative processes capable of influencing physician judgment, these policies would establish measurable standards against which hospitals could be evaluated and improve enforcement of Indiana's Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine.⁴

Collectively, these reforms would strengthen Indiana's Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine without eliminating the employment exception.

These reforms would ensure that physician employment remains subject to safeguards that preserve their decision-making. By conditioning the exception on clear statutory requirements, Indiana could align its current framework with the original purpose of the CPOM doctrine.

Conclusion

Indiana's Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine was established to preserve the independence of physicians and protect the sacred physician-patient relationship. While the state's hospital exception recognizes the realities of modern healthcare delivery, the limited enforcement mechanisms have created an environment in which indirect corporate influence can occur without being a clear violation of the law. As physician employment by large hospital systems continues to expand, the distinction between

legitimate business administration and improper control over clinical judgment becomes increasingly important.

Texas demonstrates that hospital employment and physician autonomy are not mutually exclusive. Conditioning physician employment on physician governance, written independent policies and oversight, has led Texas to preserve the intent of the Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine. Indiana can accomplish the same without abandoning its existing statutory framework.

Strengthening Indiana's hospital exception would not represent a departure from the Corporate Practice of Medicine doctrine, but a return to its original intent. By adopting clear and narrowly tailored safeguards, Indiana can protect professional liberty, patient choice and the independent practice of medicine while preserving the benefits of private hospital employment. ♦

¹ Atul Grover, Kendal Orgera, Laura Pincus, Siena Senn and Gabrielle Redford, "Why Market Power Matters for Patients, Insurers and Hospitals" (Washington, DC: Association of American Medical Colleges, May 1, 2024), https://doi.org/10.15766/rai_j6m9ze78.

Ind. Code § 25-22.5-8-1

Indiana Code § 25-22.5-1-2

Brent D. Fulton et al., New Evidence about the Heterogeneity of Indiana's Healthcare Markets: Competition, Costs and the Impacts of Market Structure 6–10, 36–43 (Nicholas C. Petris Ctr. on Health Care Mkts. & Consumer Welfare, Univ. of Cal., Berkeley, Report to the Indiana Legislative Services Agency Oct. 3, 2022).

SovDoc, The Corporate Practice of Medicine Doctrine: A Guide for Practice Owners (June 16, 2025), <https://sovdoc.com/corporate-practice-medicine-doctrine/>.

Russell J. Andrews, Corporate Medicine Is Usurping the Doctor-Patient Relationship in America, 5 EPMA Journal (Supp. 1) A7 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1186/1878-5085-5-S1-A7>.

² Ross Summer, Renda Soylemez Wiener, Dan Carroll & Alan Sager, Physician Perception of the Impact of Productivity Measures on Academic Practice, 172 Archives of Internal Medicine 967, 967–69 (2012). George Joseph, Will Craft & Jessica Glenza, 'Unlimited Dollars': How an Indiana Hospital Chain Took Over a Region and Jacked Up Prices, Guardian (Oct. 17, 2024),

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/oct/17/parkview-health-indiana-hospital-prices>. Rachael Robertson, Corporate Ownership Worsens Patient Care, Surveyed Docs Say, MedPage Today (Dec. 8, 2023), <https://www.medpagetoday.com/special-reports/features/107344>. Rachel O. Reid et al., Physician Compensation Arrangements and Financial Performance Incentives in U.S. Health Systems, 3 JAMA Health Forum e214634 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamahealthforum.2021.4634>.

³ Keith Lefkowitz, Texas's Corporate Practice of Medicine Prohibition: What You Need to Know, Hendershot Cowart P.C. (June 11, 2026), <https://www.hchlawyers.com/blog/texas-corporate-practice-of-medicine-prohibition-what-you-need-to-know/>.

Tex. Occ. Code § 162.001(b)

Tex. Occ. Code §§ 162.0021–162.0024

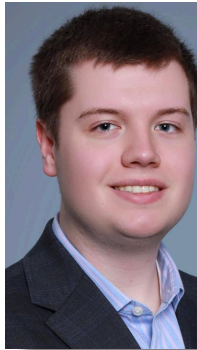
Tex. Occ. Code §§ 162.003–162.006

⁴ S.B. 1661, 82d Leg., R.S. (Tex. 2011); H.B. 1532, 86th Leg., R.S. (Tex. 2019).

How to Fix the U.S. House

James Madison Would Expand it to 6,000 Members

Evan Wareham is a graduate from Butler University with a background in History and Political Science. His work spans public service, from supporting Indianapolis Public School students through the Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library to gaining government experience at the state and federal levels.



In his *Federalist Papers*, James Madison argued that the House of Representatives should expand with the size of the American population. According to him, any elected body that contained "so small a number of representatives will be[come] an unsafe depository of the public interests."¹ Representatives would be unresponsive to the wider issues faced in their districts, as they had to account for more constituents than they could handle. In this chaos, Madison feared they would "most likely to aim at a permanent elevation of the few on the depression of the many," listening more to influential interest groups, ripe with money and status, compared to the average person. Power would become disproportionately centralized in their hands.

Centralized power is not only antithetical to the ideals of the United States, but it is a highly inefficient method of governance. Pope Pius XI understood this perhaps better than anyone. In his 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*, he developed what he described as the "principle of subsidiarity," asserting that "one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry."² In practice, he argued that matters should be handled by the smallest or most localized competent authority. Larger ones should only intervene when the smaller powers fail to do it

themselves. This idea has not only been a staple of Christian morality, but also a core principle of other democracies. The European Union employs it thoroughly, leaving the vast majority of decisions to their member states, only taking action in specific, select instances.

Congress recognized Madison's own principle of subsidiarity for over a century-and-a-half. The House was given the unique power to increase its own size. Accordingly, the amount of seats expanded following every census. As the national population grew, so did the number of representatives, beginning with fifty-nine members in 1789 and growing to an average of thirty-to-forty members every ten years.

That was until 1929.

Following a decade of gridlock, Congress passed the Reapportionment Act of 1929. The law limited the number of House seats to its current total of four hundred and thirty-five. Since then, the total U.S. population has skyrocketed by more than two hundred million; yet the number of representatives has remained the exact same.

James Madison originally envisioned a representative-to-constituent ratio of about one representative per every thirty or fifty-thousand citizens. Nowadays, that ratio is more towards one per every seven-hundred-and-eighty-six thousand.

So why would Congress choose to impose a permanent limit? Prior to 1929, Congress was tasked with manually expanding the House after every census. At the time, there was no defined method of calculating how many seats a state should gain or lose. This was left to the incumbent Congress to decide. Every ten years, there would be a new battle over who should receive the most. In fact, by 1929, the legislative branch had been deadlocked for nearly two decades. The last reapportionment was in 1911, and following the 1920 census, Congress failed to redistribute seats for the first time in its history.

Frustrated politicians also worried that the House would become too big. To their point: if we were to apply Madison's intended representative ratios to the current United States population, the House would be as large as 6,800 to 11,000 members. No one could comprehend having to compromise with thousands of other representatives. Any expansion would also cost

money: more salaries to pay, new offices to be built, and—if necessary—the construction of a new legislative chamber.

It can be easy to identify with these concerns. However, I push back on the idea that more representation means slower legislation. This comes down to two reasons: decreased centralization and reduced polarization.

While numerically small relative to its population, the House is, ironically, very centralized. Individual politicians are tasked with covering the interests of entire states. They are overloaded with excessive paperwork and forced to work overtime, weakening productivity. Ordinary constituents are routinely “thrown into the pile” of opinions rather than being listened to on a more personal basis. Only the wealthy have easy access to them. In the minds of representatives, they’re the only ones who “actually matter” when trying to get re-elected.³

Voters are not only being ignored, but they are also being required to pick one person to represent a district’s political spectrum. Incumbent politicians in big cities, such as our very own Indianapolis, serve populations of eight-hundred thousand or more, but align with a party that not everybody supports. In the most recent election in 2024, nearly thirty-percent of Indiana’s 7th District voted for a Republican representative.⁴ However, Democrats won a simple majority, and therefore the entire city. Political minorities have no voice in their own local governments.

By funneling all these votes into single districts, it is nearly impossible to compromise. Candidates are either the only ones in office or not in office at all. Citizens are encouraged to support those they believe have the best chance at winning, not who they actually align with.⁵ This puts an enormous amount of pressure on the candidates themselves: they cannot budge on almost any issue, lest they upset any wing among their massive constituent base. Bad actors gerrymander to maximize votes; or withhold important funding bills to starve the people into reluctantly agreeing with them. Both parties are suspicious of the other. Even the good-faith proposals have them asking, “What are they *really* trying to accomplish with this? Will it hurt my chances at re-election?”

Thus: a smaller House contributes heavily to increased polarization. It is no secret that the United States is divided. In 2022, a Pew Research poll reported that 72% of Republicans and 63% of Democrats viewed the opposing party as more immoral than the average American.⁶ This has enabled an environment where people feel justified in committing vicious harm. In the past two years alone, we’ve witnessed numerous acts of targeted political violence: the attempted assassination of President Trump, the murders of Melissa Hortman and John Hoffman and the killing of Charlie Kirk just to name a few.

It is never acceptable to take another person’s life for holding a different opinion. However, the constant Congressional deadlock, misinformation, and lack of decorum have convinced extremists that democracy is not working. They believe they need to “take matters into their own hands.” Even non-radical people believe the system is failing. A recent Gallup poll indicates “about half of American adults believe democracy is functioning ‘very’ or ‘moderately’ poorly.”⁷ Whether or not this is true in practice is irrelevant; the fact they *think* it is is significant in of itself. If Americans are apathetic towards their own government, then they’ll be apathetic toward the values that government is supposed to represent: liberty, independence, and humanity. We’ve seen all throughout history the rise of federalized movements: strongmen put in power because they’ll “get the job done” when nobody else will.

Some have argued that House increases would lead to a stronger federal government. These concerns, while understandable, do not account for the House’s core duty: addressing the concerns of citizens. Although the House would expand numerically, the representative ratios would decrease. Each individual politician is left with less jurisdiction, less authority, and more capability to listen. If anything: by having more people responsive to individualistic theories, legislation can be passed to protect Americans from government overreach.

Unfortunately, Americans have struggled to propose a coherent plan of action. Various ideas have floated around, but they differ significantly outside of the shared agreement to uncap the House. These include the so-called “Wyoming

Rule,” which suggests maintaining a representative ratio roughly equivalent to that of the least populated state, Wyoming. Since Wyoming is inhabited by 588,753 people, the House would expand to about 577 seats. Alternate proposals such as the “REAL House Act” argue for increasing the number of members to 583; while the “Cube Root Rule” suggests making the House size equal to the cube root of the American population, which would result in about 692 seats.

These are decent starts, but they have not found popular support among the people. According to a 2023 poll by the Pew Research Center, around fifty-three percent of Americans want the House to remain its current size.⁸ Many of the legislative proposals made in Congress have died in committee. This can be partly explained by the aforementioned fears about increased bureaucracy, costs, and federalization. It is true that any House expansion would require additional funds. If we were to take the Wyoming Rule—arguably the most minimal expansion proposal in terms of added seats—the government would need to pay an extra \$25 million in salaries alone.

Others worry that uncapping the House would produce an overly partisan effect. Both parties have consolidated their strategies around the status quo. Change, they worry, could threaten the balance of power. House increases would also lead to electoral college increases. If some states get more representatives, then they’ll become even more important in presidential elections.

However, analysts have shown these fears to be overblown. Simulations by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences demonstrate that if the House had been enlarged in the 2020 election to seven-hundred seats, any partisan advantage would be minor at best and negligible at worst.⁹ Democrats gained, at most, a less-than-three percent increase. In fact, any benefit they received could be similarly given to Republicans in a future election. While Democratic strongholds such as California technically gained more power in presidential races, the same could be said for red and purple states such as Texas and Pennsylvania. Expanding the House poses no clear threat to either party’s position.

It is not unthinkable to imagine a system where multiple representatives serve the same district. In

fact: it used to be common across America. Prior to 1842, states were given discretion over how to organize their federal districts. Plural districts—where citizens could vote for multiple electoral representatives—were used in six out of the then-twenty-six states.

Unfortunately, Congress banned them to enforce unilateral single-member elections. Legislators argued that states who employed multi-member/plural districts could—and did—pack all of their electoral votes into expansive “at-large” districts. These were “districts” that comprised the entire state instead of specific areas. Voters were forced to pick from a handful of candidates to represent them more generally, instead of choosing ones aligned with their home regions. Indeed: this is undemocratic. Studies repeatedly demonstrate that at-large districts disadvantage political minorities, since majorities have more of a voice to not only dictate agendas but also to set the terms of the “game,” so to say.¹⁰

However, these concerns seem to relate more to the size of said districts rather than the number of people serving them. It is possible to simultaneously retain smaller, separated districts while simultaneously expanding their amount of representatives. This would prevent any “tyrannies of the majority”—as John Adams put it—and keep federal politics localized. Responsibilities would be divided, strongholds would be weakened, and citizens wouldn’t need to fear “wasting their votes.”

We would see legitimate political competition. Incumbents would not be able to coast with the expectation that their constituencies will inevitably re-elect them since they “have no other choice.” Instead, plural districts encourage action. Multiple representatives need to decide whether to work with each other or outshine their rivals by accomplishing genuine change. In either scenario: representatives have more room to breathe. They can appeal to specific bases without being kicked out of politics altogether. The marketplace of ideas would flourish.

Taking into account the bipartisan concerns, historical grievances, and political realities. I want to propose a way forward regarding the House of Representatives. None of these ideas would require a constitutional amendment. Article 1, Section 4 explicitly gives Congress the power to make any

law that “alters the regulations” of House size and the “manners” of representative elections. This is how Congress has been able to expand itself already and control district compositions.

First, we should abandon single-member districts. They incentivize political gaming and don’t reflect the people. Instead, each district should elect three representatives. Three is the minimum number needed to increase proportionality while provoking minimal disruption. Writing for the *American Journal of Political Science*, John M. Carey and Simon Hix identify an “optimal district magnitude in the range of three to eight.”¹¹ They base these findings on an analysis of over six hundred elections across eighty-one countries between 1945 and 2006. The data is also reinforced by Garg et al. who claim that three-member districts would curtail gerrymandering and reduce partisan gaps. According to them, “three-member districts preserve geographic compactness, and thus the notion that legislature members represent a geographically cohesive set of voters, while increasing partisan diversity of the winning set.”¹² Numerous democracies, such as Ireland and Australia, have already implemented medium-sized districts. Irish voters report feeling like they had a tangible impact on their local elections and are more trustful of their leaders.

Under this proposal, the House would increase to 1,305 total members. While this might seem like a lot, it is insignificant compared to the 10,000+ envisioned by Madison and still cuts the representative ratio by nearly two-thirds. From there, Congress can decide whether to impose a temporary pause on further expansion or return to census-based seat increases.

The number of actual districts should also remain the same. States must avoid replicating the “at-large” problem by bundling multiple districts together. On the other hand: adding numerous new ones would be an administrative headache. State legislatures, given the responsibility of dividing up territory, would become bogged down in debates. Not only do these discussions turn highly partisan, but they also take significant time: where to redraw lines, how many people fit in them, and so on. Ideally, any House reform should allow time for the States to prepare. They need to update their

voting machines and educate voters. A minimum of four years would allow plenty of time for the changes to take hold in the public consciousness and let administrators sort out the technological kinks.

In terms of the cost, it is negligible. The enlargement would necessitate about \$151 million for salaries. When taking into account staff and office expenses (estimated at about \$2.3 million per representative), the total annual cost would be an additional \$2 billion per year. Furthermore, infrastructure payments would likely end up a one-time payment of about \$300 million. These costs combined are not massive spending: they merely comprise about 0.03% of the federal budget—less than a cup of coffee per American. However, not only do they provide a democratic boost, they would enable numerous economic benefits. Stronger democracies regularly report increased consumer spending, business growth, and financial stability, not to mention the added potential for efficient economic legislation.

The bigger question becomes how to handle voting in these new plural districts. Some might argue for a block voting method. Block voting is a structure where all three candidates are voted on simultaneously. Imagine being given a ballot that says, “Here are the eight candidates running in this election. Pick three of them.” Then, the candidates with the top-three total votes win. Block voting is simple. Americans are already familiar with it since it is essentially how we vote in single-member districts.

However, I would argue against it for a number of reasons. For one: it would not solve the underlying problems. Political minorities would still struggle to gain any voice in government. Imagine if block voting was employed for the 2024 election in Indianapolis. Sixty percent of the city’s inhabitants would likely vote straight-party tickets and select three Democratic candidates. The three Democratic candidates would win virtually every time. Thus, we would end up in the same exact place that we are now: political minorities without representation. If anything: by combining this system with an expanded House, polarization might actually become worse. We would be retaining the same party dynamics while multiplying them on a massive scale. Increasing

the House *can* be a useful tool for reducing polarization, but it must be accompanied by a fairer and consensus-based voting system.

The only real argument for block voting is that alternate methods are too confusing. Recently, Indiana became the eighteenth state to ban ranked-choice voting (RCV) in local elections. This is a system where, instead of simply supporting one candidate on a ballot, voters rank them in order of preference: most preferred, second-most preferred, and so on. Whoever receives the majority of first-preference votes wins the election. However, if no majority is reached, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated, and their votes are redistributed to the other candidates.

State Senator Jeff Raatz, upon introducing the bill to prohibit these systems, claimed that the method was hard to understand for the average citizen. People inadvertently “voted against” their preferred candidates. According to him, this also risked ballot exhaustion since “someone’s vote is no longer counted because all the candidates a voter chose have been eliminated from the contest.”¹³

These are fair points. It’s important for elections to have as few rules as possible. Otherwise, as Senator Raatz alluded to, voters can be misled, intentionally or not. Ranked-choice does not seem suited for single-member districts. There are too many variables employed in the process of picking one person.

However, multi-member districts are another story. It makes sense to delineate multiple candidates since you have to pick multiple candidates anyway. Ranked-choice is a better fit there, provided that it is adjusted and clarified for the average citizen.

I propose a compromise: a hybrid positional model. Positional voting is similar to RCV in that voters rank candidates from most preferred to least. In this case, however, each ranking is accompanied by a certain value (ex. ten points, seven points, five points, etc.) Rather than doing runoffs and redistributing votes, whoever receives the three-highest point totals win.

This is far simpler to explain on the ballot while still preserving the majority’s will. Whoever wins will be, mathematically, the most-supported representatives across the entire district.

Combined with an expanded House, politics can turn less existential. For instance: let’s focus on a Libertarian Party member in Indiana. Right now, the single-district system puts them at an immense disadvantage. Few will want to vote directly for them because they fear “wasting their vote” and “letting an opposing candidate win.” But if plural districts were implemented, citizens could theoretically vote for both a Republican candidate *and* a Libertarian one.

This even applies to intra-party dynamics. Consider that the two political parties are already composed of various factions. Republicans, for instance, possess libertarians, conservatives, and moderates. Despite some common goals, they differ in their approaches. However, this ideological diversity is suppressed at the federal level. Single-member districts incentivize putting forth “broad appeal” candidates to attract the most voters. Libertarian proposals are often shelved in favor of more generalized (and less effective) legislation. Even if some specific ideas are shared by certain Democrats, nobody wants to give an inch to the other or else risk looking “weak” and losing re-election. In this case, however, representatives would have more leeway to build cross-aisle coalitions. Citizens could elect a broader scope of politicians, less rigid in their party affiliations. Polarization would likely decrease.

But how would such a system behave in practice? Let’s employ an example. Imagine if Indiana’s 7th congressional district expanded to three representatives. Voters would be instructed to rank candidates in order of most-preferred to least. For this hypothetical, let’s apply the following points system: the first choice gets ten points, second gets seven, and third gets five.

Let’s also say, for the sake of argument, that the Democrats wanted to maximize their seats, so they ran three candidates: André Carson, Curtis Godfrey, and Pierre Quincy Pullins.¹⁴ Democratic voters would most likely want to put their party’s three candidates in the top spots.

However, the specific placements are important. For Democrats, let’s assume, based on his large win in the primaries earlier that year, that Carson is the most popular pick for first-choice, and that those who don’t place him in the first spot will put him second.

Godfrey and Pullins still need to compete for the second and third spots. If we apply real polling data from 2024, sixty-one percent of non-Carson Democrats supported Godfrey.¹⁵ For the purposes of this example, let's assume that the same percentage applies to the number of people who pick him second.

For this analysis, I will round point fractions and voter numbers down to the nearest whole number. The Democratic point totals would appear something like this:

Out of 185,987 total Democratic-aligned voters, Carson receives about 91% of their first-choice rankings (1,692,481 points). He then earns 9% of second-choice rankings (117,171 points). This gives him a point total of 1,809,652.

Meanwhile, Godfrey earns 5% of first-choice rankings (92,993 points), 61% of second-choice rankings (794,164 points), and 34% of third-choice rankings (316,177 points). Godfrey's overall point total stands at 1,203,334.

Lastly, Pullins takes about 4% of first-choice rankings (74,394 points), 30% of second-choice rankings (390,572 points), and 66% of third-choice rankings (613,757 points). He gains an overall score of 1,078,723 points.

This assumes perfect conditions and party discipline. Realistically, there would be more variation in voting habits: Carson might receive fewer votes, and Godfrey and Pullins might obtain more. Nonetheless, this does demonstrate positional importance. While party voters might be generally aligned in their preferred candidates, those specific placements can split point totals.

A Republican candidate would not need to win a majority but merely gain more points than the bottom-ranking Democrat. This is very achievable. It's important to remember that not everybody who voted for André Carson in 2024 was a registered Democrat. He likely attracted moderate centrists ambivalent to party lines. If the Republicans put forth a competitive candidate—supported by the Indianapolis base and able to persuade independent voters—they could have a realistic shot at obtaining the third and final representative.

Let's conceptualize a scenario where Republicans and Libertarians—believing they shared enough common interests—formed a coalition and put forward a single candidate. Using

their combined vote totals from 2024, which were 86,161 votes, this candidate would score 861,610 points if all Republican/Libertarian voters ranked them first-place on the ballot.

They are already nearing the threshold. They would merely need 217,113 more points to overtake Pullins. This can be plausibly accomplished by persuading independents and crossover votes. Notably, any Democratic voters who rank the coalition candidate in second or third place would simultaneously reduce the point totals of lower-ranked Democratic candidates, meaning the actual threshold for coalition success may be lower than this estimate suggests. A four-to-five percent decrease in overall pro-Democrat second/third-place votes—consistent with commonly observed election crossover averages—might itself be sufficient.¹⁶ In the span of an election cycle or two, the coalition could amass even more support. They would have demonstrated they are a legitimate electoral force, encouraging more of their base to go to the polls next time. After all: only around fifty-five percent of registered voters in Marion County actually participated in the 2024 election.¹⁷ Voting numbers can fluctuate.

Note that this example similarly simplifies voter behavior. In practice, voter preferences would vary widely. There would not be a unanimous pick for first-choice. If Republicans and Libertarians ran separate tickets, then there would also not be a unified placement among every voter. However, the fundamental advantage of positional voting remains: even minority coalitions can realistically compete for representation without requiring majority control.

No reform would immediately alter the country's political landscape, but it would lay the groundwork for change to occur over time. While this example focuses on how Republican and Libertarian voters could gain representation in a heavily Democratic district, the same mechanics apply in reverse. In Republican-leading districts, Democratic minorities would benefit similarly. The purpose of this example is not to privilege one party over another, but to demonstrate that plural representation increases fairness for all political minorities.

Ultimately, expanding the House of Representatives is not only true to the country's

founding vision, but also a pertinent solution to centralized government. When combined with a hybrid positional voting system, it promotes responsive representation, fair constituent influence, and reduced polarization. Neither political party would be inequitably affected.

Instead, local populations receive a stronger hand to play in their nation's future. Although there might be some logistical concerns, they can be easily accounted for if states are given a fair timeframe to adjust. Ordinary Americans benefit the most. And James Madison would be pleased. ♦

¹ James Madison, "Federalist No. 55," in *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (Signet Classics, 2003), 335-341.

² Pope Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno (On Reconstruction of the Social Order)" in *The Papal Encyclicals 1903-1939*, edited by Claudia Carlen (Raleigh, NC: McGrath Publishing Company, 1981).

³ Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 3 (2014): 564-81.

⁴ "Indiana's 7th Congressional District Election, 2024," Ballotpedia. https://ballotpedia.org/Indiana%27s_7th_Congressional_District_election,_2024.

⁵ Keith Smith. "Why Just Two Parties? A Voting Game to Illustrate Duverger's Law." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45, no. 4 (2012): 759-64.

⁶ Diane Stirling, "The 'Great Divide': Understanding US Political Polarization." *Syracuse University Today*, October 23, 2025. <https://news.syr.edu/2025/10/23/the-great-divide-understanding-us-political-polarization/>.

⁷ Nicholas Riccardi, "Americans like Democracy, but Don't Believe It or US Institutions Are Working Well, Poll Finds." *AP News*, November 20, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/us-democracy-poll-economy-justice-system-89a3b60f50adf1fee7d9873d36aa9506>.

⁸ "Americans' Dismal Views of the Nation's Politics," *Pew Research Center* (2023): 91.

⁹ Drutman et al., "Part V: Impact of House Expansion on the Partisan Control of Congress and the Electoral College," in *The Case for Enlarging the House of Representatives* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2021), 21.

¹⁰ Carolyn Abott and Asya Magazinnik. "At-Large Elections and Minority Representation in Local Government." *American Journal of Political Science* 64, no. 3 (2020): 717-33.

¹¹ John M. Carney and Simon Hix. "The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-Magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems," *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 2 (2011): 383-97.

¹² Garg et al. "Combatting gerrymandering with social choice: The design of multi-member districts," in *Proceedings of the 23rd ACM Conference on Economics and Computation* (2022), 560-561.

¹³ "Raatz Roundup: Prohibiting Ranked Choice Voting." *Indiana Senate Republicans*, January 21, 2026. <https://www.indianasenateRepublicans.com/raatz-roundup-prohibiting-ranked-choice-voting>.

¹⁴ These were the three candidates who ran in the 2024 7th district Democratic primary.

¹⁵ Polling data taken from Ballotpedia.

¹⁶ Dowling et al. "Crossover Voting Rates in Partisan and Nonpartisan Elections: Evidence from Cast Vote Records." *Political Research Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2025): 721.

¹⁷ Marion County Election Board. "Marion County Voter Turnout," *Indy.gov*. <https://www.indy.gov/activity/marion-county-voter-turnout>.

Franke

Mark Franke, M.B.A., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review and its book reviewer, is formerly an associate vice-chancellor at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.



The End of Reading

(Aug. 7) — “The End of Reading Is Here” was the title of an essay link I received in my email from The Atlantic magazine. I would have expected this to be written by a whiny old curmudgeon like me or a librarian worried about her job or even by a retired language arts teacher like my wife. Instead, the author Rose Horowitch is rather young, at least based on her attached picture.

In the essay Horowitch reports on interviews with college professors, high school teachers, book publishers and just about anyone she could get to talk to her. There was a common theme among all these experts: Americans are losing the ability to read and understand lengthy literary works with complex sentences.

While trying to decide whether Horowitch had the issue nailed or was just crying wolf, I ran across another article posted by Fortune magazine. The author, Austin Sarat, a professor of humanities at Amherst College, despairs of getting his students to read books ... whole books, that is. He complains that students come to him for advice on how to skim the required reading assignments. They have no inclination to actually read a book cover to cover. Besides, isn't that what AI was invented to do for us?

I can empathize with that, although not sympathize. In my day we had Cliff's Notes, although they were meant as study guides and not replacements for the original works. In the interest of full disclosure, I also freely admit to a grade-school addiction to Classic Comics. I could get a sense of titles and authors that were above my reading level at that age, and I still insist that I never reverted to a comic-book version in high school or college.

The data Sarat referenced is depressing. Surveys of high school English teachers confirm

that they are assigning fewer than three books per year. The New York Times runs frequent articles on the decline in reading skills among students, with one third of high school graduates leaving school without basic reading proficiency.

We all know the cause behind this decline. Screentime is the culprit. Who needs a library when YouTube and its influencers stand ready to opiate us? Without the depth of learning from serious reading, that is, devoting the time needed to read serious stuff, our minds become traffic jams of 30 second sound bites and short burst internet memes. Is it a wonder that public discourse has devolved into inflammatory accusations shouted at increasing decibel levels?

I had my first exposure to this reading decline when I was a volunteer assistant volleyball coach at the university formerly known as IPFW. We endured a lot of winter bus trips across the Midwest. One year a player told me that his goal was to read an entire book over the course of the four-month season. He had never read a full book before. It was a fantasy novel but that didn't matter. What mattered was that he resolved to read it all ... and he did.

Love of reading is learned at home. Reading specialists stress the importance of parents reading to their children. Horowitch credits her father, who read to her every night, with instilling this ethic in her. My teacher wife would read to our young grandchildren when they stayed with us. Now that they are older, they need no encouragement from us to read on their own.

I volunteer to read to primary school students in the Real Men Read program. Based on the thank you cards I received at the end of each school year, these kids were listening and could remember their favorites from the five books I read to them. I am convinced that programs like Real Men Read make a difference, especially among those kids who don't get read to at home.

The problem is that the parents are reading less themselves. Less than 50 percent of adults read a single book in 2022 according to the National Endowment for the Arts, but 57 percent placed a bet. This looks to me like we have too much money and too little intellectual curiosity. Maybe it's just our demand for instant gratification, getting what we want without having to work for it. I think the

medieval Church classified this as sloth, one of the seven deadly sins. After all, it is hard work to read things that require thought.

While clearly I am beating the drum for more reading, I seem to be falling short of my own advice. Over the past several years I have noticed a pronounced decline in my reading speed coupled with a significant loss of retention. I assumed it was my advancing age but perhaps it is the postliterate culture.

I will just blame YouTube. That's more soothing than facing the other reality.

Summer Parades

(July 12) — It's officially high summer according to the thermometer and, most importantly, according to the school vacation calendar. In the past that meant lots of community parades on Saturdays, most of which were aligned with that town's summer festival week. Most of Fort Wayne's surrounding towns had them. I know, because my Navy veteran father would march with his comrades in each one of them.

The small town parades were special. Civic organizations, major businesses and local politicians all marched. The township fire department put most of its rolling stock in line with the large farm machinery and the oversized trucks sporting flyers promoting one of the festival queen candidates. My children and grandchildren loved going.

Usually there was a wagon loaded with the local high school alumni who came back for their 50th graduation anniversary. Of course that went back to when these towns had their own high schools, many of which were casualties of the "bigger is better" school consolidation mania of the 1950s and 1960s.

I admit to being nostalgic as well as constrained by a selective memory, a memory that mercifully filters all but what I choose to remember. But nostalgia ain't what it used to be, a quote most appropriate to that 20th century philosopher Yogi Berra but it is author Peter De Vries who gets the historical attribution.

The biggest parade here in Fort Wayne was the Three Rivers one that kicked off a week-long community celebration. We would always arrive

early to get a shaded seat along the west end streets where the two-hour parade began. Crowd estimates exceeded 100,000 back in those days, although I don't how anyone could make an accurate count.

Nearly every Fort Wayne high school sent its marching bands which were interspersed among the politicians, police units, TV personalities and not-for-profit floats. My children liked the horse patrols, hoping the following pooper scooper would get an opportunity to display his skills. My personal favorite was the Baby Bin precision drill team furnished by the city's garbage collection contractor. Original, to say the least.

Alas, the Three Rivers parade is no more, having died along with the entire festival. I suppose it is a sign of the times as our entertainment-crazed society has many other outlets to satiate its addiction.

Or maybe it is due to our growing apathy toward commemorations of any kind. Attending a parade was part patriotism, part respect, and part gesture of thankfulness toward the parade participants and their service to all of us. Much of each parade was composed of veterans, first responders and public office holders.

And then there were the many floats. While bemoaning the Three Rivers parade demise with my wife, she mentioned the lovingly constructed floats community organizations would build. It was these floats that were missing from the July Fourth parade. Perhaps they have become too expensive to build or, more likely in my opinion, the willingness of volunteers to do the work has dropped below sea level.

At least this year Fort Wayne had a July 4 parade. It wasn't as long as the old Three Rivers incarnation nor did it appear to draw the same size crowd. We were able to sit streetside, a reflection perhaps of the lower attendance.

My wife's only negative about the parade was the propensity for parade units to pass out candy. She is a retired elementary school principal and does not think giving children a load of sugar is a good idea at any time. She may be right about that but I worry that it directs the children's attention away from the marchers and toward the sideliners walking along the edge of the street with bags of candy. The candy may be the lure but at least the

children were at the parade. A teaching moment for the parents, to use my wife's professional lingo.

It was there that we met a true American. As we crossed the street looking for a place to set our lawn chairs, a woman called out "Happy Fourth of July" to us. We asked if we could sit next to her and she welcomed us. We learned that she came to Fort Wayne from Alabama in 1973 and just seemed happy to be here. Her son and granddaughters sat next to us.

Shirley greeted every unit that passed, all 60 plus of them, with "Happy Fourth of July." It was genuine happiness for the event and for its meaning. She understood why we were there.

Compare Shirley's perspective with that of the mobs that are defining community participation as downtown takeovers. Note that the emphasis has shifted from gratitude for the service of others to extreme selfishness and self-indulgence. Only a delusional egotism (or is it egoism?) can pretend takeovers are nothing more than the Declaration's pursuit of happiness.

America needs more Shirleys.

Our Revolutionary War Vet

(July 5) – With the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and all, the number of patriotic events and ceremonies seems endless. I'm not complaining about that; I think it is a good thing that we are looking back to this important founding document and its timeless truths. We need its encouragement now more than ever.

So it was no surprise when my wife, who is an active member of the Fort Wayne chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, received an invitation to the Patriot Walk event at Lindenwood Cemetery. What was a surprise was the ceremony that concluded the walk – the dedication of a marker designating Lindenwood as the final resting place of a veteran of our War for Independence.

Since the city of Fort Wayne likes to date its founding to the fort built by General Mad Anthony Wayne in 1794, my math challenged brain couldn't work out how we had someone who was in the Continental Army in the 1770s. The answer was quite simple once it was explained at the dedication of the marker.

Col. Alexander Ewing was a founding father, if you will, of the city of Fort Wayne but had served in the Pennsylvania militia during the war. He also served in the War of 1812. He kept moving west until eventually settling in Fort Wayne. His family's wealth came from land speculation, both in Fort Wayne and elsewhere and from a very successful fur trading company. Ewing Street downtown is named for him as is Ewing Park.

After Lindenwood Cemetery was opened in 1860, Ewing's remains were reinterred there.

Lindenwood's Patriot Walk included going to Ewing's grave for a brief memorial and the tradition of placing pennies on the gravestone. But that was just one of six graveside stops on the walk. The general manager of the cemetery had researched national and cemetery records to find five other veterans who were Fort Wayne natives and now buried at Lindenwood. Each represented one or more of our modern wars.

Lt. Paul Baer, the original namesake for Fort Wayne International Airport, was the World War I representative. He was the American army air service's first recognized ace in that war, meaning he was the first to shoot down five or more enemy planes.

Joseph Foy was the World War II designee based on his Coast Guard service.

Then things got interesting for me personally. Each of the Korean, Vietnam and War on Terror representatives has a personal though indirect connection to me. The Vietnam veteran, Karl McComber, was the older brother of a friend of mine from high school. The Korean veteran, Jay Cameron, was the father of a longtime friend from church. The War on Terror representative, Kevin Pape, was a former student of my wife's. Kevin was the only one of the six killed in action so his selection for the Patriot Walk seemed most appropriate.

I had no idea that three of the six would prove personal but then this is the Midwest where people still know other people based on long term residency and connections through families, neighborhoods, churches and schools. I find it sad that these relationships are disappearing as we become an uprooted, less anchored society.

The conclusion of the walk was the dedication of the Alexander Ewing patriotic marker. The Sons

of the American Revolution coordinated the event and included a color guard from the Wayne High School Air Force JROTC program. There were three Alexander Ewing descendants present for the ceremony but I was not able to discern if they are current residents of Fort Wayne or traveled here for this.

Colonel Ewing's roadside marker is placed at the entrance to Lindenwood and can be seen by traffic driving by on West Main Street. It resembles the historical markers one can see along roads in the eastern states. Since history is my avocational interest, I pay attention to these and must repress the urge to pull over to read each one as I drive by.

The cost of the marker was funded by the William G. Pomeroy Foundation as part of its goal to identify and commemorate burial sites of Revolutionary War patriots. The Sons of the American Revolution is a partner organization in this project.

Modern society has contributed to short memories and even shorter attention spans among us. Now as the hubbub of July 4 passes, will this sudden surge in patriotic fervor dissipate or will it leave a lasting commitment to the ideals of the Declaration? For me at least, I will be reminded every time I pass the Ewing marker or these six other gravesites as I drive through Lindenwood on the way to my grandparents' graves.

Some things are worth remembering.

The Declaration Parchment

(June 29) — With the semiquincentennial of the Declaration of Independence, there is a plethora of new books written about this major event. Most focus on the Declaration's language and its meaning, especially its most memorable sentence in the second paragraph.

That's understandable but I am a contrarian by nature so I have been wondering about the process of writing, editing and publishing the Declaration. For example, is the document on display at the National Archives the original or a later copy? Not that it really matters but enquiring minds want to know, as the National Enquirer used to scream in its marketing.

The short answer to the question about the originality of the official document on display is

more or less "Yes." I came to this conclusion after reading an interesting book by Stanford University historian Michael Auslin entitled "National Treasure: How the Declaration of Independence Made America."

Auslin told the Declaration's story by following its physical existence since 1776. Long story short, the Declaration parchment has been on the move, spending time in storage, hidden during wartime and sometimes available only for private display before finding its permanent home at the National Archives.

What I found most interesting is its original drafting and adoption by the Congress in 1776. Unfortunately the Founding Fathers didn't have copy machines, cloud storage or PC direct printing. Auslin does a good job of unpacking a poorly documented process to trace its movement.

Anyone who has seen the musical "1776" knows that Thomas Jefferson was delegated the task of writing a first draft of a declaration. How he had time to do that with all the singing involved is beyond me but he did accomplish it. This happened sometime after June 7 when Congress authorized a draft to be written.

Jefferson finished his draft and submitted it to the rest of this five-man committee on June 28. The committee (John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman and Robert Livingston) made a few simple edits and forwarded it on to the full Congress on June 28 as a "fair" copy. Our earliest saved documents are from this point. Jefferson's original with committee edits is now with the Library of Congress and John Adams' personally copied version is held by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

But there was a procedural problem in that Congress had not yet voted to become independent. This it did on July 2, not July 4 as is generally believed, and then took up editing the document as a committee of the whole. The edits were scrawled by hand on the committee's copy.

Writing by committee is a sketchy proposition at best but in this case, Congress did itself proud. Eighty-six individual edits were approved and the full document was reduced in length by one-quarter. Most of the edits were directed at Jefferson's list of the king's usurpations but a few were in his most quoted second paragraph,

improving his language. (To learn how that important paragraph was improved from Jefferson's version, see Walter Isaacson's "The Greatest Sentence Ever Written.")

One might imagine Jefferson's resentment at these changes, but then writers have always resented their editors.

This is where there is a gap in the historical record. The Secretary of Congress, Charles Thomson, did not record these edits as they were approved but simply left a spot in his journal to insert the final version.

The reason we celebrate July 4 is that it was on that day that Congress approved the language of the Declaration. This hand-edited version was sent to a local printer, John Dunlap, who likely cut it up to distribute to his typesetters. A proof copy was sent to Congress, which found several errors to be corrected. There are 26 extant copies of this broadside version.

Preparation of the official or engrossed copy was assigned to Timothy Matlock, who executed it with his careful calligraphy. It was returned to Congress on August 4, when the iconic signing ceremony did not happen except in patriot legend. Actually it took several years to get every Congressman's signature because many delegates had already left Philadelphia by then.

This engrossed copy with everyone's signature is the official copy now at the National Archives. It has the edits approved by Congress on July 4 but contains one overlooked misspelling as well as some late corrections quite visible today.

So we can acknowledge that the displayed copy is in fact the original, at least in terms of being the official version signed by nearly all Congressmen. The document that Congress passed on July 4, the fair copy, is unfortunately lost but does that really matter to anyone but a history nerd like me?

It is the timeless principles asserted by the Declaration that truly matter and we have Jefferson's original words, albeit moderately edited, to remind us of that glorious cause for individual liberty within self-government.

The Pledge of Allegiance

(June 10) — I saw a recent news report of a school classroom in Tennessee that got a very

practical lesson in why America has an official Pledge of Allegiance.

A substitute teacher was surprised that most students remained seated during the school's recitation of the Pledge. Confused, he asked them why. Most couldn't provide an answer other than some said they didn't agree with several of the nation's current policies.

It became, as professional educators are wont to say, a teachable moment. He had the students read novels by former Navy SEAL Jack Carr. His books are reputed to be thrillers, always a popular genre, replete with themes of service and sacrifice — the stuff patriotism is made of.

(In the interest of full disclosure, I must admit I have not read any of Carr's books but resolve to correct that deficiency yet this summer.)

It worked. More students began standing for the Pledge and encouraging classmates to do the same. Class discussions were more participatory and a better understanding of the true meaning of patriotism was observed.

Which leads to two questions. First, how long had this been going with at least implicit acceptance by the school hierarchy? Second, why did it take a substitute teacher to address it?

As Americans we have the right to refuse to stand for Pledge as a matter of free speech but this presumably is based on a principle such as religious belief. I had a close friend in high school who did not recite the Pledge because he was a Jehovah's Witness and that faith considers such reverence a form of idolatry. His principled decision was clear and respectfully observed.

No clear principle like that of my former classmate was evident in this Tennessee school. I suggest that civics education is sadly lacking there, as attested by that conscientious substitute teacher.

I can offer two personal examples of a much more positive response. At the Lutheran elementary school where I am a volunteer, I was asked by the kindergarten teacher to come to her class to talk about flag etiquette. These kids, whose classroom windows look out at the school flagpole, see the colors posted and retired each day by the older kids.

I explained how the flag is raised every morning and why some days it is at half-staff. I brought two

eighth graders with me to demonstrate how the American flag is folded 13 times, once for each of the original states. I explained why the flag should never touch the ground or otherwise be mistreated. Finally, I told them that when a flag is too tattered to display, it should be taken to an American Legion post for a solemn burning ceremony.

The teacher finally had to cut off the questions due to time.

The second event happened as I got to the entry gate for a Fort Wayne TInCaps game. Just as I arrived, the national anthem began. Everyone at the gate and in the concourse stopped and turned to the field, including my ticket taker.

I submit that my small dataset is evidence of an America that still cares about her flag, the Pledge and all our patriotic symbols. We cared about our nation's symbols throughout our history, given the number of federal holidays that we observe directly related to our Republic and its founding principles. We start the summer with Memorial Day in May then move into June with Flag Day and on to Independence Day on July 4. But we aren't done with our remembrances. There is Patriot Day and Constitution Day in September, and then Veterans Day in November.

Two more personal examples support my case. A veteran friend at my American Legion post puts a friendly notice in mailboxes when he sees a flag that has outlived its natural life. He told me that most respond positively to the suggestion, with a new flag displayed in short order.

Also, my neighbors began a tradition several years ago to line our curb with small American flags for patriotic holidays. I counted the number on Memorial Day and there were over 100 along our short cul-de-sac. It will be an especially colorful summer for my street as we celebrate our 250th anniversary on July 4th.

That said, it is important to recognize that the flag is a symbol of our aspirations as Americans. It represents what we truly are, even if imperfectly, and what we proclaim to the rest of the world. It points to America's great experiment in self-governance constrained by each citizen's "unalienable rights."

Old Glory reminds us every time we pledge allegiance to it that we have a heritage handed

down to us as "one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Insanity Defense

(June 1) — To listen to typical conversations these days, one can easily get the impression that most issues have simple answers. It seems that no matter the question at hand, the responses are quick in coming and declarative to the extreme. One friend of mine ends his strongly opinionated statements with "Period!".

That is what I like about my monthly Socratic discussion group. While we don't check our personal opinions at the door, we expect everyone's opinion to be challenged by rhetorical friend and foe alike. Our goal is to leave with a consensus on the monthly provocation, which is what we call the issue to be discussed.

At least that's the way it is supposed to work.

Last month we left with no comprehensive solution to propose even though we did agree on several reforms that would move us closer to an optimal resolution.

The provocation was to propose reform of the judicial system to disallow pleas of "not guilty by reason of insanity" for violent criminals and repeat offenders. This was submitted by two members, one of whom is a practicing attorney. We also have a retired judge in our group so technical expertise was at the table.

The issue revolves around a legal principle known by its Latin name — *mens rea*. Literally this is translated as "guilty mind" but is better defined as the inability of knowing right from wrong. To put it another way, it is the lack of capacity for intentional action.

There are both practical and philosophical implications in how this issue is embedded in our jurisprudence. We took on the philosophical question first.

Does the defendant have the moral compass to know right from wrong?

Does the defendant have the mental capacity to form evil intent?

These two questions help determine the validity of the not guilty plea. There are tools the judge can use to rule on the plea. One is the M'Naughten Test, named for a putative assassin of a British

prime minister who shot the wrong man. I was familiar with the historical incident but didn't realize its importance until it was explained by a member.

Note that the test centers on the defendant's cognitive ability, not his morality. Enter the Model Penal Code test, which adds a volitional element. In this test the defendant's ability to conform his conduct to the demands of the law can be considered.

Adding volition to the equation sounds too much like a Flip Wilson defense: "The Devil made me do it." I would have been happy to discuss the theological implications of this but our Socratic rules are there to prevent going down rabbit holes, no matter how appealing.

Moving to the practical side of the issue, the group saw an obvious problem — violent repeat offenders avoiding conviction through an insanity plea. But this led to two further questions.

How frequently is this defense used and is there any indication that its frequency will increase?

In answer to the first question, it is not a common occurrence. One study reported that only about 30 felonies are dismissed nationwide on insanity pleas each year. Which leads to the second question.

It does not take a mental health professional to be concerned about the increasing frequency of senseless violence in our brave new world. The group suggested descriptors like rage, irrationality, hopelessness and trauma to paint a psychological portrait of a society rapidly devolving into a Hobbesian state of nature. While Thomas Hobbes could never have foreseen this, the pervasiveness of 24 hours news channels, Google search and artificial intelligence are supplanting rational thought with instantaneous passionate reaction.

The group foresees two overarching trends that suggest an increase in insanity pleas being offered.

The first is our ability as a civilized people to adapt to increasing disaffection among a growing segment of our citizenry, mental entropy if you will. Mental illness has spiked in the past 50 years but it was unclear to us whether this is due to improved diagnoses or the above-mentioned disaffection.

The second trend is simply a matter of the judicial workload imposed on our criminal justice system. Insanity pleas are a function of the prosecutor's office workload. A judge cannot entertain an insanity plea unless the prosecutor recommends it.

Have our county jails become overloaded due to a need to house convicted criminals who would be better rehabilitated in mental hospitals? One member suggested that the failure to understand this difference has led to the federal court order for Allen County to build an expensive new jail. Would some of that money have been better spent on the construction of mental hospitals?

Our session ended on this depressing note. Will the White House correspondents dinner shooter become a test case for pushing the insanity defense? The shooter's attorney is being coy for the present. Supreme Court, get ready. ♦

Eichenberger

Dan Eichenberger, M.D., is an Indiana native with 30 years experience as a primary care physician, physician executive and healthcare consultant. He is the recipient of the Indiana University Southeast Chancellors Medallion.



Meritocracy

(Aug. 27) — The word “meritocracy” was born as an insult. In 1958, British sociologist Michael Young published *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, a dystopian satire warning that a society ruled by intelligence and effort would create a new, more arrogant elite and a resentful underclass. The Left later embraced the term’s pejorative spirit.

Today the Democratic Socialists of America and progressive intellectuals treat meritocracy as a dangerous myth and an ideology that legitimizes inequality, stigmatizes the unsuccessful, and must be transcended in favor of equity and collective control. Conservatives should reject that narrative and reclaim the virtuous concept. Properly understood, meritocracy is the practical expression of limited government, personal agency, and equality under the law.

The idea is far older than the word. Plato’s *Republic* envisioned rule by those educated in wisdom and virtue rather than birth alone. Aristotle argued that offices should be distributed according to *axia* which he meant as worth or excellence. Rome emphasized *dignitas* earned through public service and competition. Confucian China built the world’s longest-running institutional meritocracy through civil-service examinations that, in principle, opened the bureaucracy to talent regardless of pedigree.

Thomas Jefferson spoke of a “natural aristocracy” of talent and virtue as the best hope for republican government. These traditions recognized a basic truth: societies function better when positions of responsibility go to those capable of discharging them, and individuals flourish when their efforts and abilities shape their outcomes.

John Locke and Robert Nozick provided the key ideas behind classical liberalism, a political philosophy that values individual freedom. Locke argued that people own themselves and their own labor. When someone works on something that no one else owns, like land or natural resources, that work makes it their property, as long as they leave enough for others.

Nozick built on Locke’s ideas. He said a person’s property is fair if it was obtained honestly in the first place or if it was freely given or sold by someone else. The government has no right to take that property and redistribute it just to create more equal outcomes or meet certain needs. Nozick famously compared taxes used purely for redistribution to forced labor.

These ideas support limited government. The government’s job is to protect people’s rights, enforce contracts, and remove unfair barriers. It is not to force equal results for different groups or guarantee specific outcomes.

Conservatives defend meritocracy because it aligns with personal agency and free will. People are moral agents, not passive products of systems. Equal rights under color-blind rules create the conditions for individuals to exercise that agency. Equality of opportunity means the same formal rules for everyone; it does not require equal outcomes. Natural differences in talent, temperament, family culture, time preference, and effort produce unequal results. Attempting to erase those differences through continuous state intervention expands government power, creates dependency, and weakens the incentives that drive excellence. Heather Mac Donald has documented the practical trade-off with clarity: given persistent average group differences in academic skills, strict demographic proportionality and high standards cannot coexist in selective institutions. Insisting on the former means lowering the latter, in medicine, aviation, STEM, and elite education.

The modern Left, particularly its democratic-socialist wing, rejects this framework. The Democratic Socialists of America and the modern “Leftists” have published explicit critiques labeling faith in meritocracy a “false faith.” Drawing on Michael Sandel’s *The Tyranny of Merit*, they argue that even a perfectly fair meritocracy remains morally unacceptable. Ranking people by talent

and effort creates hubris among winners and humiliation among losers, undermining social solidarity. Outcomes reflect privilege and structural forces far more than individual desert; therefore the proper response is not better opportunity but collective control of the economy, public ownership of key industries, and equity measures that adjust results by group. Merit becomes ideology, an alibi for capitalist hierarchy that must be displaced by democratic planning and needs-based distribution.

This is not a minor disagreement about policy details. It is a fundamental clash over human nature and the purpose of government. One side treats individuals as responsible agents whose choices and capacities should shape their lives under equal rules. The other treats disparities as primarily systemic and therefore as problems the state must continuously correct through preferential treatment, outcome engineering, and expanded public power. The first approach limits government to the protection of rights and the maintenance of a level legal playing field. The second requires an administrative apparatus capable of measuring, adjusting, and re-ranking people by identity categories and statistical targets.

The practical consequences are already visible. When institutions abandon rigorous selection in the name of equity, standards fall. When rhetoric of rising is replaced by rhetoric of systemic victimhood, personal responsibility atrophies. When the successful are told their achievements are largely unearned privilege and the unsuccessful are told their condition is someone else's fault, both dignity and motivation suffer. Young's original satire warned against a cold cognitive elite. The greater danger today is the deliberate dismantling of any standard of excellence in favor of engineered parity.

Conservatives should not apologize for defending merit. A free society cannot function without it. Limited government presupposes citizens capable of governing themselves and of accepting the unequal results of free choices. Personal agency is empty if outcomes are reassigned by political criteria. Opposition to the DSA and modern "Leftists" agenda is not hostility to fairness; it is insistence that fairness consists in equal rules and equal rights, not equal results. The alternative is a politics of permanent grievance and

permanent administration, the very expansion of state power that limited-government principles exist to prevent.

Meritocracy, properly understood, is not a guarantee that every individual will succeed according to effort alone. Family, culture, health and chance all play roles. It is, however, the only system compatible with human freedom and the only one that treats people as ends rather than as instruments of a preferred social pattern. The Left's rejection of it reveals more about its appetite for power than about any genuine concern for the common good. Conservatives should say so clearly, reclaim the ideal, and defend the institutions, schools, professions, and markets, that still reward excellence over identity. The alternative is not greater justice. It is the soft tyranny of equity based on Marxist's philosophy.

Common Sense

(Aug. 14) — The words "common sense" and "nonsense" are used as weapons in politics today. Each side claims to own reality. Conservatives talk about "obvious truths." The Left often calls those claims ignorance or cruelty. To understand why these words carry force, and why many policies feel detached from the real world, it helps to recover their original meaning and their link to basic Christian wisdom.

"Common sense" entered English in the late 1300s. It described the mental ability that takes information from the five senses and forms a clear picture of reality. It came from Aristotle and the Latin *sensus communis*. By the early 1700s, it meant the practical judgment ordinary people share. Philosophers took it seriously. Descartes said everyone has good sense, but few use it well. Scottish thinkers defended it against extreme skepticism. Thomas Reid argued some truths are so basic they need no complicated proof. Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* made the term political, insisting independence from Britain was obvious to any reasonable person.

"Nonsense" appeared in the early 1600s as a word for ideas that lack meaning or sound absurd. It never gained a positive philosophical meaning. It remained a way to reject foolish thinking.

Scripture adds a moral dimension. Proverbs contrasts wisdom with folly. Wisdom includes

caution, attentiveness and the ability to live in the real world without self-destruction. Folly is the refusal to face consequences or learn from past mistakes. Proverbs warns, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” Biblical wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord because human reason easily deceives itself. This helps explain why certain modern policies of the Left often get labeled nonsense: they contradict clear patterns in biology, economics, human behavior, and history.

One example is the rapid medicalization of gender-distressed minors. The 2024 Cass Review found that studies supporting puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones for minors are “remarkably weak,” with no high-quality evidence of reliable long-term mental-health benefits. European countries that once led in this care have restricted these interventions because of risks to fertility, bone density, and brain development. Treating sex as infinitely malleable ignores biological reality and abandons the precautionary principle once standard in pediatric medicine. The Left continues to promote this approach.

Immigration, housing and criminal justice show similar patterns. Estimates using National Academies of Sciences methods place the lifetime net fiscal cost of an illegal immigrant at roughly \$68,000 after taxes. Large-scale illegal alien releases have strained housing, schools, and emergency services. Rent-control expansions have reduced rental supply and slowed new construction. “Housing First” experiments for homeless individuals without treatment requirements have not reversed the problem in major cities despite billions spent. Chronic homelessness remains strongly tied to untreated mental illness and addiction.

Policing debates reflect the same blindness to incentives. The “defund the police” and reduced-enforcement movements after 2020 coincided with homicide spikes in many cities. Crime clearance rates fell, and visible disorder rose until some funding returned. Assuming lower enforcement would improve safety without trade-offs ignored decades of deterrence research. The Left still advances versions of this idea.

Election-integrity debates follow the pattern. Opposition to voter-ID requirements continues

even though rigorous studies, including large NBER analyses, find no significant negative effect on registration or turnout, including among minority voters. Polls show broad public support. Basic verification routines in banking, alcohol and gun purchases or air travel are treated as uniquely suspicious in voting. People reasonably ask why.

Education and cultural policy reveal the same tension. Resistance to school-choice programs treats competition as a threat, even though many studies show benefits for low-income and minority students. Ideological content on gender and race has expanded in K–12 with limited parental opt-out, despite weak evidence of academic gain and growing public pushback. The system protects institutional monopoly while resisting reforms that could help the students most often invoked in progressive rhetoric.

Economic and healthcare proposals show parallel disconnects. Wealth-redistribution schemes and expansive welfare repeatedly produce reduced labor supply and poverty traps from benefit phase-outs. Single-payer healthcare promises universal coverage but underestimates rationing and long waits already seen in those systems. It is not possible to deliver the care Americans expect under pure single-payer. The United States continues to lead in new therapies because market incentives reward innovation.

These examples point to a wider habit on today’s Left: putting big system-wide theories and the goal of changing people’s hearts ahead of what the actual results show. When evidence appears about biological limits, how people respond to incentives, the real money costs or natural differences among people, it is often dismissed as prejudice instead of facts that should change the plan. As a result, the gap between good intentions and real-world outcomes keeps getting bigger.

Christian wisdom does not demand political uniformity. It demands humility before reality and a refusal to repeat patterns already shown to harm the vulnerable. Prudence weighs access against quality, compassion against accountability, equality under the law against engineered group outcomes, and merit against forced equity. Every tradition has insights and blind spots. The task is not to declare one side permanently wise and the other permanently foolish, but to recover the older

meaning of common sense: the disciplined habit of testing claims against the world as it actually is.

When that habit erodes, nonsense fills the vacuum. The cost appears in irreversible medical interventions for minors on weak evidence, cities where disorder is normalized, markets that punish work, schools that resist proven reforms and institutions that lose public trust. Recovering common sense begins with the willingness to admit that some policies have failed their own stated purposes yet continue. That willingness is not cruelty. It is the beginning of prudence.

The Entitlement Trap

(July 22) — In 2025, the U.S. federal government is projected to spend around \$7 trillion — roughly 23 percent of the nation’s entire economic output. More than half of that spending goes to mandatory “entitlement” programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other benefits. Social Security alone accounts for about 22 percent of the budget, while Medicare and other health programs take another large share. Retirees receive roughly 62 percent of the federal spending that can be tracked by age. Meanwhile, interest payments on the national debt are rising fast and already rival defense spending in some years. Projections show that Social Security, health programs, and debt interest will drive most spending growth over the next decade.

This is more than a budget problem. It reflects a deeper cultural shift: the rise of an entitlement mentality, where many Americans expect unearned benefits as a right, blame others for their setbacks and view hard work and personal responsibility as outdated ideas.

This mindset did not appear overnight. For most of Western history, societies emphasized duty, reciprocity, and earned rewards.

The ancient Greeks and Romans closely tied rights and privileges to responsibilities. In Athens, citizenship brought voting rights and legal protections, but citizens had to serve in the military, pay taxes, and participate in public life. Aristotle argued that justice should be proportional — people should receive rewards based on what they contribute, not simply on what they demand. Romans operated a patronage system in which wealthy patrons provided protection or aid to

clients, but clients were expected to show loyalty and service in return. Even “bread and circuses” handouts to the urban poor were seen as tools for keeping order, not automatic rights. Stoic philosophy taught self-control and inner strength rather than dependence on external support.

Early Christianity introduced a stronger focus on compassion, but always through voluntary action. Christians stood out for willingly and freely caring for the poor, sick, widows, and orphans out of love and faith — never through government force or legal demands. This charity came from the heart and the community, not from taxes or state mandates. Yet the Bible strongly rejected idleness: “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Hard work was honored, and charity was viewed as a moral duty for those who could give, not an enforceable claim by those who chose not to work. In medieval feudal Europe, society ran on mutual obligations. Lords provided land and protection; vassals and serfs provided labor and military service. Rights and privileges came with clear responsibilities. Failing to meet your duties could mean losing your benefits.

Early America built on these foundations. Puritan settlers saw work as a divine calling and idleness as a moral failing. Community support existed but was usually short-term and reserved for those who could not help themselves, such as widows or orphans. The Declaration of Independence spoke of unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness — not guaranteed results or free provisions. Influenced by thinkers like John Locke, the Founders focused on “negative rights”: protections against interference with your life, freedom, or property. Government’s main job was to safeguard these freedoms, not to supply goods and services. The Bill of Rights placed limits on government power rather than listing things it must provide. Visitors like Alexis de Tocqueville admired American self-reliance but warned that democracy might tempt people to trade liberty for government security.

Major changes began in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Industrial Revolution created new challenges: urban poverty, dangerous factory jobs, and economic swings that left families without support. Traditional help from churches and neighbors sometimes fell short. Progressive

reformers began arguing that rights should include “positive rights” — things the government must actively provide, such as education, housing, or income security. They drew on ideas from European programs, such as Germany’s social insurance under Bismarck.

The Great Depression accelerated the shift. President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal introduced Social Security, unemployment insurance, and other federal programs. What began as emergency relief during hard times gradually became a permanent part of government. Then, in the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society dramatically expanded the system. Programs like Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, and broader welfare were launched as part of the War on Poverty. The goal was noble — reducing hardship — but the results were mixed at best. Family structures weakened in many communities, single-parent households increased sharply, and a culture of long-term government dependence took root for some. The old focus on negative rights (freedom from interference) gave way to positive rights (claims on others’ resources through taxes). One person’s right to benefits now requires taking from someone else.

Today, the consequences are clear. A growing sense of victimhood has replaced earlier values of resilience and personal effort. Discomfort is often labeled oppression. Calls for widespread student debt forgiveness, reparations, or universal basic income treat personal choices or historical wrongs as reasons for others to pay indefinitely. Welfare and aid programs reach more than one-third of U.S.-born households in some analyses. Labor force participation among working-age men has stayed relatively low in recent decades, even as the economy has recovered from past shocks. Suggesting work requirements or time limits is frequently dismissed as unfair or insensitive.

The financial costs are unsustainable. Entitlement spending keeps climbing as the population ages, and healthcare expenses rise. Politicians avoid serious reforms because many voters now see these benefits as untouchable rights. Beyond the dollars, the cultural damage is significant. This mindset teaches that outcomes should match desires rather than effort. It pits taxpayers against benefit recipients, erodes trust,

and weakens the habits of self-discipline and mutual respect that once defined American life. A dignity-based culture — built on personal responsibility and earned respect — has been partly replaced by a victim-based culture focused on grievances and demands.

Critics of this view are often labeled “heartless,” “cruel,” or “lacking compassion.” These are classic ad hominem attacks — personal insults meant to shut down debate instead of addressing the actual issues of cost, incentives, and long-term harm. That misses the point entirely. Genuine compassion aims to help people become independent again, not trap them in lifelong reliance on government checks. Before large federal programs took over, private charity, churches, and mutual-aid societies accomplished a great deal through voluntary giving. Mutual-aid groups, fraternal organizations, and faith-based efforts built hospitals, orphanages, and support networks without coercion.

True individual rights, as understood by the Founders and classical liberals, are negative rights that protect personal freedom without imposing burdens on others. They mean you have the right to your life, liberty and property — others simply may not violate them. These rights do not require anyone to provide you with goods, services, or outcomes at someone else’s expense.

In recent decades, however, the political left has redefined the term “rights” in the same way they have redefined words like “equality” (from equal treatment under the law to equal outcomes), “justice” (from fairness to redistribution), and “tolerance” (from respecting differences to demanding agreement). What began as protections against government overreach has been stretched into positive claims on other people’s money and labor. A “right” to healthcare or housing now means the government must take from some citizens to give to others. This redefinition turns rights from shields of liberty into tools of redistribution and control. The Founders understood that real liberty requires strong character and personal virtue. We have increasingly traded those for political promises of Security and fairness, and the results — strained families, higher debt, and declining social trust — speak for themselves.

The entitlement mentality has betrayed America's founding promise—turning equal opportunity into a culture of endless dependence. It is time to boldly reclaim the rugged principles of self-reliance, personal responsibility, and true liberty that built this nation.

The West's Suicide Pact

(July 7) — We once built civilizations on the raw edge of uncomfortable speech. Now we demand trigger warnings for the Iliad and therapy puppies for election results. This isn't progress. It's civilizational decay.

Let's look back without the rose-tinted glasses of modern sensitivity and we'll see the ancient Greeks didn't invent "safe spaces" — they invented parrhesia, the dangerous right to speak truth bluntly in public assemblies, theaters and philosophy. Socrates died for it. Athenian democracy thrived on frank, often brutal debate, not curated emotional cushions. Romans prized dignitas and libertas: personal standing earned through deeds and defended with courage, not appeals to administrators over "microaggressions." Stoics like Seneca and Marcus Aurelius trained themselves to endure insults, losses and harsh realities because weakness invited conquest.

Christianity universalized human dignity through the imago Dei while demanding resilience: "In this world you will have trouble." Jesus offended Pharisees, apostles faced martyrdom and early believers proclaimed divisive truths without demanding pagan trigger warnings. The American Founders, steeped in these traditions, wrote the First Amendment not to protect feelings but to guarantee "uninhibited, robust and wide-open" debate. Jefferson knew that error thrives in the dark — it survives only when reason is not free to combat it openly. Frontier settlers and immigrants didn't build a superpower by policing feelings—they built it by enduring hardship, clashing over ideas and advancing anyway.

Then came the great inversion of the 2010s. Victimhood culture (documented by sociologists Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning) replaced dignity. Offense became currency. Words morphed into "violence." Microaggressions (everyday slights,

real or imagined) turned ordinary conversation into potential harm. Safe spaces and trigger warnings spread from Tumblr to Ivy League campuses, shielding students from discomfort instead of preparing them for life. The result? A generation trained to outsource resilience to institutions, where "truthful speech" that challenges identity, statistics, biology, or history gets reclassified as aggression.

A quieter but equally corrosive consequence of this safetyist revolution has unfolded inside the counseling and therapeutic professions themselves. As the culture redefined discomfort as harm, many counselors — trained in the same academic environments that elevated microaggressions and trauma-centric worldviews — shifted their techniques accordingly. Increasingly, therapeutic models encourage clients to establish "boundaries" so expansive they function as emotional fortresses and to interpret ordinary familial conflict as "toxicity." In practice, this has led to a marked rise in therapists recommending estrangement as a legitimate or even healthy solution for Millennials and Gen Z adults. As one section of the document notes, "Today's framework externalizes everything: your discomfort is someone else's fault." This therapeutic reframing has fueled an unprecedented surge in parent-child estrangement, where cutting off family is recast not as a tragic last resort but as an act of self-care. The result mirrors the broader cultural pattern: instead of cultivating resilience, we institutionalize avoidance, leaving families fractured and individuals less capable of navigating the inevitable frictions of adult life.

This transformation did not arise evenly across the political spectrum. It emerged overwhelmingly from the progressive left, rooted in late 20th century academic theories that reframed power, language and identity as primary sites of harm. Critical theory, postmodernism and later intersectional activism recast speech not as a tool for persuasion but as a mechanism of domination, with subjective offense elevated over objective truth. These ideas traveled from elite universities into media, HR departments, K-12 education and Democratic Party politics, where liberal institutions increasingly equated compassion with insulation from discomfort. Conservatives did not invent speech codes, bias response teams, or trigger warnings; they resisted them. The modern

safetyist ethos is a distinctly progressive project — one that replaced classical liberal free expression with therapeutic governance and moralized emotional vulnerability.

The harms are now measurable and devastating:

Intellectual rot: Universities, once arenas for clashing ideas, became echo chambers. Disinvitations, shout-downs and biased response teams chilled speech. Students self-censor on basic realities — crime data, sex differences, immigration trade-offs — because acknowledging them risks social death. Truth dies in the dark.

Personal fragility explosion: “Safetyism” produces brittle adults. Studies on trigger warnings show they often heighten anxiety rather than reduce it. Real-world employers don’t offer safe spaces; they fire people who can’t handle feedback. Mental health crises among young people surged alongside this cult of sensitivity.

Societal polarization and stagnation: When disagreement equals harm, compromise becomes impossible. Policy debates on policing, education, or borders devolve into accusations of “trauma.” Innovation and reform require confronting hard truths—something a culture addicted to emotional comfort cannot do. We argue over pronouns while competitors who still value toughness advance.

Erosion of responsibility: Historical cultures built antifractility. Adversity, including verbal, forged character. Today’s framework externalizes everything: your discomfort is someone else’s fault. This infantilizes people, weakens families and burdens institutions with endless grievance theater. Free speech, the engine of progress and self-correction, gets sacrificed on the altar of feelings.

This isn’t compassion. It’s cruelty disguised as kindness — raising generations unequipped for reality’s sharp edges. History shows resilient cultures endure; fragile ones fracture under pressure. Rome didn’t fall because it was too blunt; it weakened as softness spread among elites. We risk the same.

The remedy is brutal honesty, not more cushions. Teach parrhesia again. Reject the victimhood mentality. Recommit to dignity: thick skin, personal accountability, and the ancient truth that words, however uncomfortable, are not

violence. Real harm comes from a society too cowardly to hear the truth and act on it.

We didn’t defeat fascism, slavery or totalitarianism with safe spaces. We did it with courage and clear speech. Civilizations don’t get safe spaces; they get conquered. Harden up or disappear.

The Linguistic Assault on Reality

(June 30) — Language remains one of humanity’s most powerful tools. Spoken words helped early humans cooperate, hunt and pass down knowledge. Written language allowed civilizations to record laws, ideas and stories for future generations. Today, language is under attack. The political Left, particularly progressive activists who dominate many colleges, news outlets and major corporations, has increasingly weaponized words. Terms are stretched, flipped and redefined to make questionable ideas sound normal and to make dissent seem unacceptable. This is not simply natural language evolution. It is an effort to reshape society by first changing the meaning of words.

Words should help us understand reality and describe things in a complicated world. We do not define truth; we discover truth and use words to convey it. Adjectives, descriptors and extra phrases add details without changing the main word’s meaning. Take the “Underground Railroad.” This was a secret network in the 1800s that helped enslaved Black people escape to freedom. “Underground” meant hidden. “Railroad” used the image of trains to convey speed and movement of individuals. No one intended this description to change what a real railroad was: a system of tracks and trains. The words described; they did not rewrite facts.

For Christians, language has deeper meaning because John calls Christ the Logos—the divine source of reason, truth and order. Since God created an ordered reality, words should describe that reality rather than reshape it. Language is meant to communicate truth, not merely express feelings or serve power. The closer words stay tied to reality, the closer we come to wisdom; when they drift from truth, confusion follows.

Now look at today’s examples. For thousands of years, across nearly every culture and religion,

marriage was known and accepted as the union of one man and one woman. It was tied to building families, raising children and creating stable societies.

“Gay marriage” started as a phrase to describe same-sex unions. At first, it seemed like a simple add-on, but it quickly became a demand to change the very core meaning of marriage. In the same way, “Trans woman” was presented as a kind way to refer to men who identify as women. These seemed like harmless modifiers at first, but they quickly turned into full attacks on basic definitions. The word “woman” has always meant an adult human female, defined by chromosomes, genetics, biology and the ability to produce eggs. Now schools and governments insist feelings can override biology. They push terms like “birthing persons” and “chest feeders” to avoid saying “mother” or “woman.” This is not kindness. It is erasing real biology to fit feelings and political agendas. Human sex has always been binary and always will. Pretending otherwise does not make it true.

This pattern extends to other terms. “Christian Nationalism” is often applied broadly to Christians who believe their faith should influence their views on public morality. “Zionist,” which once primarily referred to support for a Jewish homeland in Israel, is frequently used as a political insult. The labels “Hitler” and “Nazi” are commonly thrown at opponents to generate outrage rather than understanding. Even “tolerance,” once understood as peacefully allowing disagreement, is often treated as requiring full acceptance of particular beliefs.

This strategy works because language shapes how people think. Words are like maps, not the territory itself. They help us navigate reality, but when they become disconnected from facts, they stop describing the world and start creating alternative versions of it.

The COVID era demonstrated this clearly. Early discussion of a possible laboratory leak was dismissed as conspiracy theory or racism. Questions about lockdowns, school closures, natural immunity and vaccine side effects were frequently labeled misinformation. Many Americans saw a system where certain viewpoints were protected while others were suppressed.

The result is a culture where repetition often substitutes for evidence. Schools teach that gender is independent of biological sex. Companies enforce pronoun policies. Governments allow legal sex changes based primarily on self-identification. Ideas that would have seemed controversial only a few years ago are increasingly presented as settled fact.

In some countries, restrictions go even further. Nations such as the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada have hate-speech laws that critics argue are vague enough to punish unpopular opinions. Without clear definitions, terms like “hate speech” can become tools for suppressing dissent.

Double standards intensify the problem. During the 2020 BLM protests, riots in some cities caused extensive damage and loss of life, yet much media coverage emphasized the protests as “mostly peaceful.” By contrast, the January 6 Capitol riot was rightly condemned but led to widespread prosecution and scrutiny of conservative rhetoric.

These trends are not random. Progressives hold significant influence in universities, news organizations, corporate HR departments and technology companies. Critics argue that vague labels such as “racist,” “transphobic,” or “hate speech” are often used not to promote clarity but to discourage disagreement.’

The consequences are serious. When words no longer correspond to reality, honest discussion becomes difficult. Problems cannot be addressed if people are afraid to describe them accurately. Trust in institutions declines because people feel they are being manipulated rather than informed.

George Orwell warned about “Newspeak,” a language designed to narrow thought and limit what people could express. When language is carefully managed to favor one ideology, independent thinking becomes more difficult.

History repeatedly shows that distorted language often precedes abuses of power. Reality does not change because institutions adopt new definitions or because dictionaries update their entries. Biological facts, human nature and objective reality continue to exist regardless of political preferences or opinions.

The solution is not censorship from the opposite side. It is a renewed commitment to clear

definitions, open debate, evidence-based reasoning and free speech. We should defend the right of people to express differing viewpoints, even when we disagree with them.

The fight over language is ultimately a fight over truth itself. If words lose their connection to reality, society loses its ability to pursue knowledge, solve problems and preserve freedom. The stakes are too high to ignore.

A Definition of Men, Women

(June 23) — To prevent the further erosion of ordered society, Indiana must take a clear and permanent stand against the Left’s campaign to detach law from biological reality. Activists have spent years pressuring institutions to replace objective sex with subjective “gender identity.” The General Assembly and voters should amend the state Constitution to codify objective, scientifically grounded definitions of “man” and “woman.” Statutory efforts are welcome but remain vulnerable to reinterpretation or reversal by future political pressure. Constitutional language provides the durability our legal and social institutions require.

When the law fails to define sex, confusion spreads wherever sex distinctions matter: athletics, medicine, prisons, schools, shelters and child protection. Policies based on self-identification have produced documented harm, including biological males placed in female facilities, unfair competition in women’s sports and medical records obscuring critical biological information.

These issues arise from substituting ideology for biology. Most Americans, including many Hoosiers, support retaining birth sex as the basis for legal categories like identification and athletics. Public policy should reflect these commonsense views rather than the demands of a narrow activist movement.

Indiana can anchor its law in reproductive biology. Human sex is defined by the role an organism is organized to perform in reproduction, specifically the production of one of two gametes: eggs or sperm. There is no third gamete and no continuum of sex categories.

Woman: An adult human organized around the production, storage and delivery of eggs and the capacity for gestation.

Man: An adult human organized around the production and delivery of sperm.

These definitions describe developmental pathways set from conception and observable throughout life. Sex is not arbitrarily assigned or socially constructed; it reflects biological organization.

It is commonly said that XX equals female and XY equals male. While usually accurate, this framing is incomplete. Chromosomes are indicators, but genes ultimately determine sexual development.

The SRY gene (typically located on the Y chromosome) initiates male development by triggering the formation of testes, hormone production, and male anatomy. When SRY is absent or nonfunctional, development proceeds along the female pathway.

Rare genetic conditions illustrate this principle:

XX male (De la Chapelle syndrome): SRY is present on an X chromosome, leading to male development.

XY female (Swyer syndrome): SRY is absent or inactive, resulting in female development.

These conditions do not create additional sexes; they are exceptions within the same binary framework. Individuals with atypical chromosomes (such as XXY or XYY) still develop along male or female pathways. Disorders of sex development (DSDs) are medical conditions requiring accurate diagnosis: not evidence that sex is a spectrum.

For rare situations where sex classification is unclear or challenged, Indiana can adopt a consistent, evidencebased process:

Phenotypic assessment: Evaluate external anatomy and, if necessary, internal reproductive structures using ultrasound or other techniques.

Genetic analysis: Conduct chromosomal testing and confirm the presence and function of key genes such as SRY.

This approach addresses complexity without abandoning biological reality. It ensures individuals receive appropriate care while maintaining coherent legal categories.

Indiana's recent legislative efforts correctly advanced statutory definitions that tie sex to biological characteristics at birth (gametes, anatomy, and hormones oriented toward reproduction) while rejecting subjective identity as a legal category. I was honored to provide input on a Senate measure and to work with our legislators on this critical issue. These steps represent meaningful progress.

However, statutes can be amended by simple majorities, reinterpreted by state agencies or overturned by courts responding to cultural or political shifts. Activists have shown they will continue pressing until they succeed. A constitutional amendment requires broader consensus and raises the bar for any future reversal. It places biological reality into the state's foundational document alongside protections for life, liberty and property. It sends a clear message: Indiana will not surrender the meaning of "man" and "woman" to ideological pressure or activist redefinition.

Clear constitutional definitions provide practical protections that affect daily life:

- Fairness in sports: Female athletes retain meaningful competition and scholarship opportunities instead of losing them to biological males.
- Safety in single-sex spaces: Prisons, shelters and facilities can maintain sex-based policies grounded in objective biology rather than self-declaration, preventing the documented harms seen in other states.
- Medical accuracy: Healthcare providers keep clear biological data for screening, treatment, drug dosing and research, unobscured by ideological terminology that can confuse care.
- Protection for children: Policy reinforces that sex is observed at birth based on biology, not arbitrarily assigned. This helps counter social and medical transition pressures on minors.
- Legal and linguistic stability: Ends compelled speech, reduces endless litigation over basic categories, and stops the administrative chaos of constantly shifting definitions driven by political trends.

The Indiana General Assembly should propose a constitutional amendment stating that, for all purposes under state law:

- "Woman" and "man" carry the biological meanings defined above;
- Sex is binary; and
- Any determination of sex in ambiguous cases shall follow the phenotypic and genetic protocol described.

The amendment should further specify that these categories exist independent of an individual's psychological, behavioral, social, or subjective experience.

This language is precise, defensible and faithful to both science and reality. It avoids the strategic error of resting the entire case on chromosomes alone while still providing an objective, testable standard that resists efforts to blur every distinction. Claims that "trans women" or "trans men" represent new biological or ontological categories have no basis in science. A biological male who identifies as a woman remains biologically male, and vice versa. Better terminology would be a feminized male or masculinized female. Gender identity does not alter fundamental reproductive biology or developmental ontology.

Indiana has a genuine opportunity to lead. By codifying these definitions, we affirm that law must track biological reality rather than reshape it to accommodate ideological demands from gender activists. We protect women's hard-won sex-based rights, ensure fairness for female athletes, maintain safety in vulnerable spaces, and preserve medical integrity. Most importantly, we refuse to lie to children about the nature of their own bodies.

The binary of male and female is not bigotry. It is the observable, genetically grounded structure of human reproduction and development. The campaign to portray it as optional or oppressive is an attack on truth itself. Codifying biological reality is not cruelty: it is the basic responsibility of a self-governing people who value truth, fairness and the well-being of future generations.

The time to act is now. Indiana's constitution should reflect biological reality, not transient cultural fashion pushed by activists. Our children,

our women, and the integrity of our institutions deserve nothing less.

Father's Day

(June 16) — With Father's Day approaching, the cultural conversation about men, fathers, and masculinity deserves more care than slogans usually allow. This is a season when many families pause to honor fathers, grandfathers, mentors and father figures whose steady presence has shaped lives in quiet but lasting ways. For that reason, the way society speaks about masculinity matters.

The term “toxic masculinity” was never intended as a broad indictment of men. It was coined in the 1980s by psychologist Shepherd Bliss within the Mythopoetic Men's Movement: a group of men seeking to address emotional repression, authoritarian fathering and the loss of meaningful male purpose in modern life. Early usage focused on helping men become better versions of themselves through self-reflection and responsibility. It was an internal conversation among men about maturity, not an accusation against manhood itself.

That original meaning has been largely discarded. Since the mid-2010s, progressive institutions, the political “Left,” mainstream media and Hollywood have repurposed the phrase into a powerful cultural and political tool. What began as a call for men to examine genuinely harmful behaviors was transformed into a rhetorical weapon that too often pathologizes normal and necessary masculine traits (self-control, competitiveness, physical courage, protectiveness, perseverance, responsibility and leadership) while portraying traditional manhood itself as a societal problem. These traits are not toxic when ordered toward service, discipline, family and community. In fact, they are often the very qualities that make good fathers, husbands, mentors, workers, soldiers, coaches, pastors and citizens.

The shift is striking. Before roughly 2015, the term appeared rarely in academic or feminist writing. After the rise of #MeToo and heightened cultural focus on gender, it became ubiquitous in elite media, left-leaning politics, corporate campaigns and educational settings. It was adopted as shorthand for anything associated with

traditional male norms, often applied most aggressively to straight, cisgender, Western men. High-profile examples include the 2019 Gillette “The Best Men Can Be” advertisement, which framed everyday male behavior as needing correction, and the 2016 *Ghostbusters* remake, where male characters were reduced to buffoons or villains to elevate the female leads.

Sitcoms have long reinforced the “bumbling dad” archetype (Homer Simpson from *The Simpsons*, Peter Griffin from *Family Guy* and Phil Dunphy from *Modern Family*), depicting fathers as chronically incompetent. At the same time, mothers remain the competent adults who hold everything together. Advertising has followed the same pattern for decades. This is not organic cultural evolution. It reflects a deliberate narrative push within left-leaning media and institutions to frame masculinity as inherently suspect. The selective application is telling: similar patterns of dominance or emotional restraint in other demographic groups often receive contextual explanations, while the same traits in traditional Western men are labeled toxic by default. The result is a one-sided cultural conversation that rarely acknowledges the positive roles men have played as protectors, providers and stabilizers of families and societies.

The consequences extend far beyond semantics. Boys growing up amid constant messaging that masculinity is problematic show measurable signs of disengagement. Educational gaps between boys and girls continue to widen, with boys lagging in reading proficiency and college enrollment. Male suicide rates remain three to four times higher than female rates. Father absence (already strongly correlated with poorer outcomes in mental health, education and behavior for children) finds cultural reinforcement when popular stories treat fathers as optional or ridiculous. When media and elite voices repeatedly signal that men are the problem rather than part of the solution, the message reaches boys at the exact moment they are forming their sense of identity and purpose.

This approach also clashes with the understanding of gender and family found in Christianity and other major religious traditions. Biblical teaching presents men as called to sacrificial leadership and protection within the

family, with fathers responsible for nurturing and instructing their children without exasperating them. Scripture affirms strength and courage while condemning their sinful distortions. Similar complementary male and female roles appear across Judaism, Islam and classical religious thought: men and women have distinct yet mutually dependent roles oriented toward family stability and human flourishing. The modern media pattern (in which fathers are diminished, and traditional masculine responsibility is mocked) represents a clear departure from these frameworks.

Critics of this critique sometimes argue that the term merely highlights real problems such as domestic violence, cruelty, domination, recklessness, or emotional suppression. Those problems deserve honest attention and should never be excused. The difficulty arises when the label expands to cover broad swaths of normal male behavior and is deployed primarily as a political and cultural weapon rather than a tool for genuine improvement. There is a clear difference between condemning abusive conduct and condemning masculinity itself. A man who protects his family, works hard, competes honorably, controls his emotions under pressure, takes responsibility, tells the truth, leads with humility and sacrifices for others is not displaying toxicity. He is displaying maturity. The original men's movement sought to strengthen men. Much of its later usage has functioned to weaken cultural confidence in manhood itself.

Society needs men who are strong, responsible and emotionally grounded — not because masculinity is toxic, but because it is indispensable. Reclaiming that understanding will require pushing back against the politicized framing that has dominated recent years. Media, education and cultural institutions would serve everyone better by portraying competent, sacrificial fathers and balanced masculine virtue rather than reducing men to caricatures. Families, churches and communities that still affirm the dignity and necessity of mature manhood play a vital role in offering boys and young men a healthier alternative to the dominant narrative.

As Father's Day draws near, this distinction becomes especially important. A healthy society

should be able to thank good men without suspicion, honor fathers without mockery, and encourage boys without teaching them to apologize for becoming men. The term began as an invitation for men to grow. It has too often been turned into an accusation designed to shame them into silence. That transformation has not made society stronger. It has left too many boys and men uncertain of their worth and unsure of their place. Restoring a more balanced view of masculinity is not only fair to men; it is necessary for families, children and communities that depend on men who are courageous, faithful, responsible, protective and loving.

The Victim Mentality

(June 3) — In every era, people face hardship. What changes is how societies respond. Ancient cultures — especially Greece, Rome and early Christianity — emphasized agency, resilience and personal responsibility. Today, many of our institutions promote the opposite: a victim mentality that externalizes blame, demands validation and weakens character. History suggests that tough love — accountability, endurance and honest feedback — builds stronger individuals and societies than coddling ever could.

Ancient Greece and Rome were built on the expectation that individuals would master themselves and meet hardship without complaint. Greek literature offers clear examples. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus faces betrayal, shipwreck and divine hostility, yet he responds with cunning and perseverance rather than self-pity. Aristotle taught that human flourishing (*eudaimonia*) comes not from comfort or favorable circumstances, but from cultivating virtue through disciplined action.

Stoicism turned these ideas into a practical ethic. Its central insight—the dichotomy of control — held that peace and strength come from focusing on one's own judgments and actions while accepting external events without resentment. Epictetus, born a slave, insisted that circumstances do not define us; our responses do. Marcus Aurelius echoed this as emperor: real power lies over one's mind, not outside events. Seneca viewed hardship as training, not injustice.

Roman history itself provided living models. Cincinnatus left his farm to save the Republic, then immediately returned to the plow — embodying duty over personal grievance. Regulus kept his word to Carthage even at the cost of torture, showing that honor and responsibility transcend suffering.

Early Christianity deepened rather than rejected this framework. Scripture consistently frames suffering as formative. Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, rose through betrayal and imprisonment by refusing self-pity and choosing faithfulness instead. Paul, beaten and imprisoned repeatedly, rejected self-pity and emphasized personal responsibility. Jesus endured the cross without resentment, praying forgiveness for His killers. The Christian message does not deny injustice, but it rejects wallowing. Believers are called to accountability, forgiveness and endurance, trusting that trials produce character.

Together, these traditions built durable cultures by elevating responsibility over resentment.

Modern Western culture has largely inverted these values. Younger generations increasingly interpret hardship through the language of grievance. Schools emphasize emotional safety over resilience. Families shield children from failure. Governments expand entitlements framed around identity and historical harm. Even churches often replace calls to repentance and endurance with therapeutic affirmation.

Social media accelerates this shift by rewarding public grievance with attention, status and institutional response. Victimhood becomes not just a way of interpreting life, but a source of moral authority.

A powerful driver of this mindset is Marxist thought. Karl Marx framed history primarily as a struggle between oppressors and oppressed. Later thinkers expanded this framework beyond class to race, gender, sexuality and other identities. Where ancient and Christian traditions saw hardship as a challenge to overcome, Marxist-influenced frameworks treat it as permanent proof of victim status requiring institutional rescue.

The result is competitive victimhood. Social capital flows to those who can most persuasively claim oppression. Responsibility shifts away from individual agency toward governments,

corporations and schools. Instead of cultivating resilience, this system incentivizes dependency.

A victim mentality does not heal individuals or societies; it erodes them. It is associated with poorer mental health, lower achievement, reduced forgiveness, and deepening social division. When institutions reward grievance with benefits, apologies, or exemptions, claims of victimhood multiply. Dependency grows, while initiative declines.

Societal cohesion also suffers. Dividing people into permanent categories of “oppressors” and “victims” breeds resentment on all sides and undermines the shared responsibility necessary for a functioning democracy.

This logic appears clearly in debates over reparations for historic injustices such as slavery. While slavery was a moral atrocity, demanding financial compensation or privileges generations later based solely on ancestry reframes history as a permanent victim claim. This approach ultimately weakens the very groups it claims to help by discouraging the agency and resilience that ancient wisdom and Christian teaching promoted.

The same mentality damages families. Rising numbers of young adults now sever relationships with parents or siblings over perceived grievances or emotional harm. Instead of working through conflict with forgiveness, accountability and endurance, victimhood culture promotes permanent rupture. Families—the most basic source of resilience—fracture, leaving individuals more isolated and dependent on external validation or government programs.

Tough love works because it aligns with what historically produced strength: clear standards, manageable hardship and the expectation of growth. Parents who set boundaries, teachers who allow consequences, leaders who demand competence and churches that preach endurance all reinforce agency rather than fragility.

None of this denies real injustice. Some suffering is not deserved and compassion matters. But when life is primarily framed through a lens of victimhood, individuals are robbed of their power. Resilience is replaced with resentment, and growth with grievance.

The choice before us is both personal and cultural. Individually, we must reject the

temptation to become victims and reclaim what is ours to control: our actions, responses and character. We must endure what we cannot change and grow stronger through it.

Culturally, we must abandon policies, education systems and habits that reward grievance and instead champion responsibility, resilience and tough love. Only by recovering the ancient wisdom of agency and the Christian call to endurance can we rebuild strong families, a confident nation and a people capable of meeting real challenges.

The age of fragility is not inevitable. It is a choice — and it can be reversed. ♦

Schansberg

D. Eric Schansberg is Professor of Economics at Indiana University Southeast, the author of “Poor Policy: How Government Harms the Poor” and an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation.



Capital Gains and Inflation

(April 7) — Ahh, it’s that time of the year again: the weather is (usually) warming; the flowers are blooming; and income tax forms are due. Everyone knows about the IRS and their W-2’s — whether they fill out their taxes by hand, use software, or pay a professional. State and local taxes hit most workers. But at least if you have a family, federal income taxes don’t get rolling until you’re making \$50K or so.

In contrast, few people think about the FICA federal payroll taxes on income, even though 80 percent of taxpayers lose more to that tax than the April 15th version of income taxes. FICA has no IRS or tax forms. The money is simply vacuumed out of your paycheck, while we pretend that the employer pays the other half of the tax, instead of passing that burden to employees through lower compensation.

One good thing about both types of income taxes: they’re “indexed” for the effects of inflation. FICA is a 15.3 percent flat tax with no deductions. So, with inflation, you make more money; they take more money; but the percentage is the same. And income taxes (at least the federal version) are “indexed.” You can see this by comparing this year’s deductions and the tax table to the previous year.

The same thing happens with Social Security benefits — and in essence, with cost-of-living raises at work. In these cases, you get more green pieces of paper to accommodate the inflation of needing more green pieces of paper to buy things. Really important. But indexing a tax code for inflation is also great news — and a key reform from Ronald Reagan’s presidency. This ensures that the government doesn’t get a higher percentage from

us. Without it, their inflation would push more of our income into higher tax brackets.

So, let’s talk about an important tax that is not indexed (and thus, is impacted by inflation): capital gains taxation. With the inflation of 25 percent from 2020-2025, if the value of your home (or other investments) increased 25 percent from \$200,000 to \$250,000, the “real value” (accounting for inflation) is the same. (You have 25 percent more green pieces of paper when you sell, but it takes 25 percent more green pieces of paper to buy stuff.)

Unfortunately, the government will treat this as a \$50,000 “capital gain”, even though your wealth is the same in real terms. In the case of your primary residence, you are artificially exempted from this tax — after a change in the tax law in 1997. (Before then, there was no capital gains taxation if you bought a house with equal or greater value. If you’re old enough, you may remember how this perversely influenced some decisions about houses to buy.)

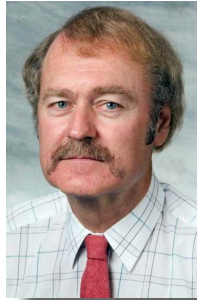
In the case of all other investments — whether rental housing or anything else — the government will apply the capital gains tax to your “gain”. This is yet another reason for the federal government to use subtle inflation taxes to finance its profligate spending and debt. It also helps to explain the shenanigans you occasionally see in the news about what constitutes one’s primary residence. (Similarly, your property taxes will increase as the assessment of your home is increased by inflation.)

Inflation is painful enough on its own. But a failure to index the tax code for the effects of inflation causes even more pain for taxpayers and puts more money in the government’s coffers. Let’s ask our politicians to index every tax for the impact of inflation. ♦

Gaski

Yes, the Communists Can Win

John F. Gaski, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is a long-time registered Republican and long-time registered Democrat — intermittently, not sequentially or serially, which should dispel any erroneous impression of partisanship. For five decades, his research specialization has been social and political power and conflict. A version of this essay first appeared in the *American Thinker*.



(Aug. 30) — Much of the American commentariat remains somewhat mystified at the number of young countrymen who can be so dissatisfied with their personal economic circumstances that they turn to discredited socialism. Lately, understanding of this phenomenon is making some inroads, but there remains a need to pull the diverse causal pieces together into a coherent gestalt, as is offered in the following.

First, is it not exasperating to hear the disaffected masses claim that the U.S. economy is not working, at least not for them? Such narcissism by the “entitlement” culture. The appropriate rhetorical rebuttal question to that posture is: Why is it working just fine for so many others? In fact, the U.S. economy is presently strong, per the standard metrics. We are at full employment, formally defined as about 4 percent unemployed. Macroeconomic growth is enduring and stable. Taxes are lower, especially for those dependent on tips, overtime, or Social Security. Real incomes, which declined under Biden, are rising (as they also did in Trump’s first term). The main negative for the consumer is that inflation is still too high, but it is truly amusing to hear Democrats and their socialist fellow travelers complain about “affordability.” Most of the abnormal surge in consumer prices in recent years is attributable to the 22 percent cumulative increase during the Biden years. Imagine how much lower retail prices would be if we could subtract out that 22 percent and the 49 percent rise

that occurred during Jimmy Carter’s term. (These numbers are correct. Inflation has actually been relatively tame during Trump’s 5½ years in office, as it was under Obama, Clinton and G. W. Bush. As Casey Stengel once said, “You can look it up.”)

So, a fair conclusion from the preceding is that the economic losers may largely have themselves to blame. The problem is not the overall U.S. economy. Data recently publicized by pollster Nate Silver reveals the diagnosis that those losers are mostly dim-witted liberal Democrat/socialists who chose college majors with little market value, leading to their own low incomes.

To further reinforce where fault lies, demographic statistics confirm how remarkably easy it is to avoid poverty in this country. You only need to do three things — finish high school (even a bad one), do not have a criminal record, and do not become addicted to drugs or alcohol — and your chances of living in poverty in the U.S. are close to zero. (There are other sets of three sufficient conditions, including factors such as “come from a two-parent household,” but the set reported here is a valid one.) Apparently, many American youth cannot surmount the low hurdles. Corollary blame in this regard, nevertheless, lies with the liberal Democrats who 1) destroyed the quality of American public schools, 2) have been soft on crime, and 3) have glorified substance abuse. Coincidence?

The role of liberal Democrat ideology and policy in creating an economically illiterate cohort should not be overlooked. Reflect again on the terrible public schools tolerated in the blue cities and states, co-mismanaged by the leftist-politicized teachers unions. The propagandized content of leftist ideology has also surely contributed to the proliferation of decrepit college majors such as gender studies, fine arts, and even sociology that hamstringing their grads in the job market.

Moreover, as well as the U.S. economy is performing now, it could be operating even closer to the optimum if not for misguided and incompetent macroeconomic interference by the left/liberal/Dem/socialist camp whenever they have held dominant power, which has produced over-regulation, excessive inflation, and massive federal debt, inducing high interest rates. (Readers will be aware that Republicans and conservatives

are not economically pure, only less guilty based on the objective record. Do not believe the misleading claim that U.S. economic growth is stronger when Democrats are in the White House. See Gaski, *City Journal*, May 30, 2016.) Again, the present difficult straits of some of our citizens are not the fault of American capitalism. They are instead the result of individuals themselves combined with the Left's sabotage.

The extant state is almost as if it has gone according to plan. A deconstruction of the American Left's playbook, circa 1970 at the beginning of its subversion campaign: "First, take over the universities for indoctrination and, in turn, to undermine our disciples' economic prospects. Then we infiltrate elementary and high schools to lower academic standards and dumb-down the populace more generally, to its economic detriment. At the same time, we dispense relentless radical propaganda to brainwash America's youth. Still, we need to dumb them down enough to render them pliable to the message — and we do need widespread economic failure to make the victims amenable to persuasion by a failed system such as socialism. In short, we ruin people's economic lives and reinforce the effect through false propaganda to keep them on track for failure. Dumb them down enough and they won't even realize that socialism is communism because the latter is socialism's ultimate aim. Onward the revolution!" (Even leaders of the Democratic Socialists of America have been publicly exposed for ignorance of what socialism is.)

An implausible conspiracy theory? Actually, Cloward, Piven and Alinsky had already said this quiet part out loud contemporaneously, and a concrete manifestation is readily identifiable: By destroying the quality of inner-city schools (all run by liberal Democrats) in particular, along with glorifying the crime and drug culture while incentivizing single-parent households, the American leftist/Dem/socialist side has undermined black opportunity enough to create a permanently frustrated and Democrat-loyal underclass. The cause-and-effect relation is so transparent that it could hardly have been unintentional.

Now they transfer the sinister methodology to the broader population. The lib-Dem Left

undercuts economic advancement for a large subset of the U.S. population while subjecting them to socialist propaganda, which is absorbed only because the Left had first handicapped the audience cognitively. This answers the prevailing question of how so many Americans can succumb to the phony lure of the failed ideology of socialism. Simply, they were manipulated into that dead-end position by the Dems' multi-pronged attack. Yes, the immediate cause is indeed abject ignorance by a segment of the public, but the ignorant have received a devious negative assist through the crippling influence of leftist ideology at the micro and macro levels. The Left's program: Wreck their schools, brainwash them and subvert their economic environment; then we've got them where we want them.

Finally, to those who are falsely confident that "it can't happen here," i.e., that the socialists or communists cannot take over America, be aware that we now have a growing socialist-amenable voting bloc that is too dumbed-down to 1) see through the shallow deceptions of the lib-Dem-socialist scheme, 2) realize that their problems are not the result of capitalism but rather due to their own leftist politics excessively imposed on that system, or 3) rightfully blame the real politico-economic perps who caused their problems. As a result, 4) they will likely vote the guilty, destructive parties into power.

Can't happen here? Note, also, that the Dems can count on an absolute floor of about 48 percent of the popular vote in national elections. Even Kamala Harris got 48.3 percent, so how many (or how few) more votes does today's socialist-controlled Democrat Party need to guarantee a win? Another way of looking at it: Suppose the floor for the current socialist-Democrat amalgam is considerably lower, say 40 percent. Add in millions of illegal votes from non-citizens and other creative Dem vote-counting, and this country truly could be on the verge of a Dem-socialist (therefore communist) takeover. (Unfortunately, the best scientific estimate of non-citizens voting in our national elections is about 3 million — as of 2008-10. See Richman et al., *Electoral Studies*, 2014.) Consider also that the Dems now proclaim that they will do anything to win.

Be afraid, be very afraid. Sorry to break the news this way. Pleasant dreams, comrades. ♦

The Bookshelf

The Rise and Fall of Rational Control: The History of Modern Political Philosophy

There are some books that are so deep that they demand effort to read, let alone review. Harvey C. Mansfield's "The Rise and Fall of Rational Control: The History of Modern Political Philosophy" (Harvard University Press 2026, 306 pages plus bibliography, \$30 hardcover at Amazon) is one of these. Mansfield, who taught political philosophy at Harvard for 60 plus years, compiled his lectures into a chronology of the rise of modernism. He also recounts modernism's death as it gave way to postmodernism. Whether that is a good or bad thing is not clear, perhaps because both are bad things.

Mansfield marks the beginning of modernism in political thought with Machiavelli in the 15th century. Machiavelli has been an academic focus for Mansfield's scholarly activity so this is no surprise. While he quotes from Machiavelli's greatest work, "The Prince," he introduces Machiavelli's thought through a little-known play he wrote, "Mandragola" (Mandrake), which is a morality play on justifying immoral means through a beneficent end. If all are in agreement on the goal, why does it matter how they get there?

Beginning with Machiavelli, Mansfield advances the West's adoption of modern thought with summaries of the writings of Hobbes, Lock, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel. He then pivots with Marx and Nietzsche, who usher in postmodernism. Some of this is difficult to follow, but Mansfield clearly knows his philosophers and sees connections that most of us would miss.

There are several underlying themes in his march through time. One is the state of nature and how mankind leaves it to achieve society based on law. Christianity is under attack throughout as its

absolutes must give way to moral ambiguity; the emphasis becomes science and history in the pursuit not of the good but of the least bad. Necessity replaces justice and legality overrides morality. This movement is what Mansfield calls the pursuit of rational control, rising to a conceit that mankind can control history through its rationality.

Thus, his definition of modernism.

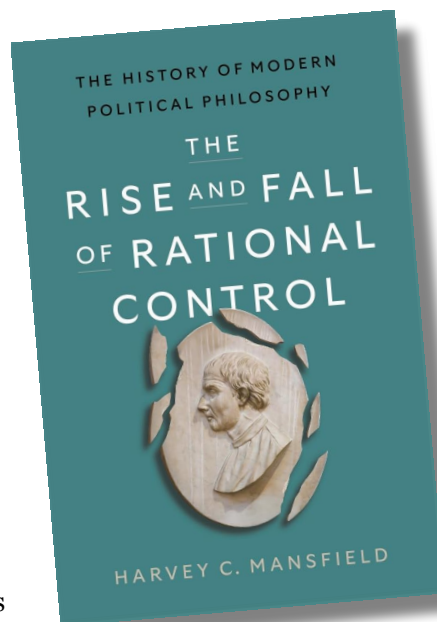
Mansfield summarizes the problem with modern liberal thought, liberal in the historic classical liberal sense, is its tendency to reduce self-interest to a matter of survival as an "unnatural constraint" rather than an appeal to the soul and its concern for "nobility and sacrifice." Modernists see and justify the necessity of doing evil while the ancients exhorted human beings to aspire to doing good, one more count in the indictment of modernity.

The tension between morality and legality is evident as the book progresses through the centuries. Moving on from Machiavelli, we get the Enlightenment philosophers and the thinking that influenced our Founding Fathers. While they certainly disagreed on major points, one can see in Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau evidence of mankind's

progress out of the state of nature and into a social contract based on individual liberty and the common good. The problem is the erosion of morality as the foundational principle. If man can't be moral, at least let him live under the constraints of government.

Kant confronts this supposition head-on with his introduction of the categorical imperative, claiming for morality a certainty not dependent on empirical or hypothetical constructs. While Kant may have made mankind more idealistic, Mansfield asks if he has also made us more moral? Maybe, but in a rational sort of way, leaving Kant in a nebulous space to my thinking.

(I should mention that my only exposure to Kant was in an undergraduate ethics class back in the early 1970s. This was in the "I'm OK. You're



OK” era and I think Kant was on the syllabus as a token foil to all the situational ethics proponents we had to read. Needless to say, I wish I had read him more extensively but his is a difficult mind to plumb.)

Mansfield follows Kant with Hegel who confronts Kant’s project with one of his own, that of the supremacy of history over morality, leading to the triumph of rational control. History is marching toward its end, proof of the validity of the modern mindset.

Marx then attempts to follow Hegel but does it “faithlessly” in Mansfield’s opinion and instead presages postmodernism. Finally, we have Nietzsche and his claim for complete freedom from rational control, i.e., the end of modernism.

I have some unsettled issues with all this, perhaps due to my own deficient understanding of his main thesis. As a classical liberal and card-carrying member of the John Locke/Adam Smith admiration society, it is disconcerting to be forced to reconsider my allegiance to a paradigm of personal liberty and limited government within Mansfield’s framework. He doesn’t reject this out-of-hand, but I just can’t accept the inference that my paradigm is a product of relativistic modernism rather than founded in universal ideals. Maybe it is his metaphor of representative democracy he presents that I find irritating—one in which the free market economy promotes both a “rat race” and a “hog trough.”

And I’m not exactly sure where he leaves the state of nature as the starting point for mankind’s motivation to come together in a society based on the rule of law. Perhaps I am overthinking this and in fact Mansfield may be quite clear. If so, I missed it.

Still, this is a tour de force effort to relate the greatest political thinkers of our modern age to each other in a logical and chronological progression. I’m sure his lectures, the ones that served as the subject matter for this book, would have been fascinating to attend . . . especially if one had the privilege of asking questions in class.

The reader can’t but hope that Mansfield would end his impressive study with a simple prescription for the future of political thought. He does provide an extensive additional reading list, should one still have any mental energy left after reading this book. But he does give the game away, if I may be so bold to suggest this. On the last page of the book, he directs his readers to Aristotle’s “Ethics” and de Tocqueville’s “Democracy in America.” An interesting duo, that. He also recommends the U. S. Constitution, a product of the modern era for sure, but perhaps one that finds the best nexus between social contract theory and Christian morality.

It is in this nexus that modern conservatives find hope. Mansfield asserts that rational control contains the seed of its own destruction. It is essentially irrational itself and must give way to something else, either postmodernism or a return to

pre-modern philosophy.

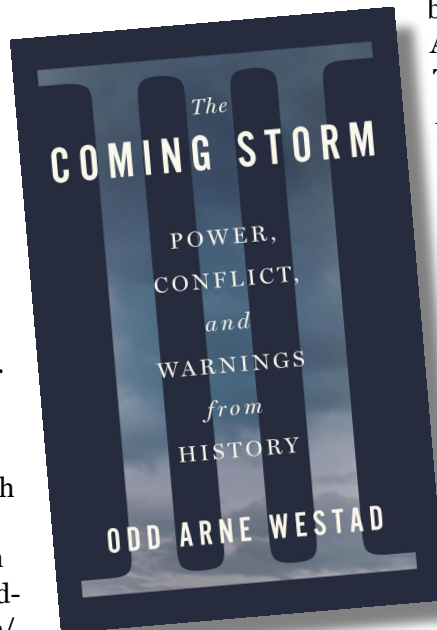
“There is no vacant space left in the world today; founding something new requires destroying something old,” Mansfield claims, and I hope he is right. Nietzsche’s nihilism is the philosophical point where I would start finding old things to destroy and replace with something better.

Christianity’s absolute assertion of truth and goodness is well positioned to fill this void.

(Colophon: For a significantly more insightful review of both Mansfield the philosopher and this book, see the Spring 2006 “Claremont Review of Books” for an essay by one of Mansfield’s former students, Ralph C. Hancock of Brigham Young University.)

The Coming Storm: Power, Conflicts, and Warnings from History

If you want to get depressed or even a tad frightened, read “The Coming Storm: Power, Conflicts, and Warnings from History” (Henry Holt and Company 2026, 219 pages plus notes, \$21 hardcover at Amazon) by Yale professor Odd Arne



Westad. The book is an analysis of great power politics in the 21st century and reads like enchiridion on why wars are nearly impossible to prevent. His concluding chapter may be entitled “The Case for Peace” but I didn’t take much comfort from it.

Westad begins with a diplomatic history lesson of the years prior to 1914. Nationalism was the motivating factor for the first time in European history as the nation-state was seen as the ideal, subject only to opposition from other nation-states. Each nation tended to see its destiny as thwarted by one or more of the others. This was particularly true, but not exclusively, for Germany as it was the newest of the great powers. Russia, France, Austria-Hungary and even Japan viewed themselves as entitled to membership in this not so exclusive club. And then there was Great Britain at the top, with the largest empire and the most powerful fleet keeping its imperial trade lines open.

Westad continues with a rehearsal of America’s decline from its status as the only world superpower in 1991 to just one of many great powers today. His list of causes includes unnecessary wars, uncertain strategic priorities, and domestic social and economic decline. Meanwhile, nationalism is on the rise across the globe leaving an unsettled strategic map. The effect of the rapid advance in technology is unknown and disruptive. Inter-nation suspicion is the operative guideline. We are long past the Ronald Reagan “trust but verify” days.

So who are America’s rivals? China is the most powerful and most incentivized challenger to U.S. hegemony. Russia and India are near the top of the great power wannabes with Turkey, the European Union, Brazil and Japan chafing under a second team status.

But it is China that demands and receives priority attention from US strategic thinkers. It has come out of the turbulent Mao years (think Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward), with the Chinese Communist Party reasserting its control while allowing limited free enterprise to promote open trade and positive capital flows.

Nevertheless the CCP has strengthened itself as a top-down, corporatist state with highly centralized planning.

China has its negatives too. Its era of economic hyper growth is over, it has a high level of governmental debt, its population is declining and the Communist Party is deeply suspicious of China’s flirtation with limited free enterprise. It has its internal problems with the Uyghurs and Tibet, and the external threat from India along its southern border.

Much of the book characterizes each of the current great powers in terms of their strengths and perceived threats in both geopolitical and economic terms. The potential for conflict seems to be everywhere, war being avoided only due to complacency in each capital that the others are not planning to strike first. But doubt remains...

What I found most disturbing was Westad’s assertion that today’s international environment is quite similar to that of 1914, and we all know how that turned out. He makes a compelling case, carefully constructed by comparing the major actors today with those of 1914. For example he argues that China’s situation today is effectively identical to Imperial Germany’s prior to World War I. Both nations struggled with a tension between hubris and fear, their conceit at being a world superpower tempered with a fear that they weren’t. This tension can erupt in a bad way at the worst time.

He also compares today’s Russia to 1914 Austria-Hungary, both large empires but with more powerful neighbors as putative allies. Austria-Hungary pulled Germany into war, elevating a Balkan dispute into a pan-Europe war. Will today’s Russia achieve the same end with support of its Chinese ally?

The situations are not identical even though both represent eras of great power competition. What makes our day more frightening is the speed of change in technology and the massive amount of information (and disinformation) available. This presents to Westad two problems for 21st great powers: a fear of falling behind the others and a fear of not acting fast enough when a crisis arises.

Westad suggests four points of geopolitical conflict that could trigger a great power war: China and Taiwan, China and the Koreas, China and Southeast Asia, and China and India. While China’s involvement jumps out, Westad notes that the global hot spot has moved to Asia. The Balkans are

still troublesome but that region no longer has the powder keg attribute it did in 1914. East Asia does. And its potential for drawing the US into a shooting war is significant. Think of our treaty obligations with South Korea and Taiwan, and our evolving relationship with India.

The U.S.-China competitive relationship does appear to be the driving force behind much of this uncertainty. Yet one cannot ignore the other putative and real great powers, all of whom see roles for themselves. The concern here is that these nations will view any given situation as a zero-sum game, much like the Europeans of 1914 viewed things. This is a particular concern with U.S.-China interactions. An “I can’t win unless you lose” mentality closes the door on compromise, Westad’s essential component of successful great power diplomacy.

Westad’s description of our world today is apt: multipolar. Will China accept that? Will Russia? More importantly, will the U.S.? There are those in our nation who believe America must stay atop the world as the single great power, seeing this as the only way to preserve national security and world peace. There is also a naïve assumption that great power war is unthinkable given nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction

Westad’s writing is what I would call dense due to his rapid fire of facts in support of or in rejection of previous assertions. Even though it is a short book, it took an investment of time to follow Westad’s train of thought. It was an informative read yet troubling when one looks at the geopolitics through Westad’s lens. Between the simplistic complacency among the world powers that world war can’t happen and the increasing information overload reducing the decision cycle to real-time reaction, the prognosis is not encouraging.

Peace depends, says Dr. Westad, on the great powers’ recognizing their narrow margins for maneuver and finding new ways to adapt to this

multipolar world. Let’s hope our statesmen can rise to the occasion.

National Treasure: How the Declaration of Independence Made America

With the semiquincentennial of the Declaration of Independence, there are a lot of new books written about this major event. Most focus on the Declaration’s language and its meaning, especially its most memorable sentence in the second paragraph.

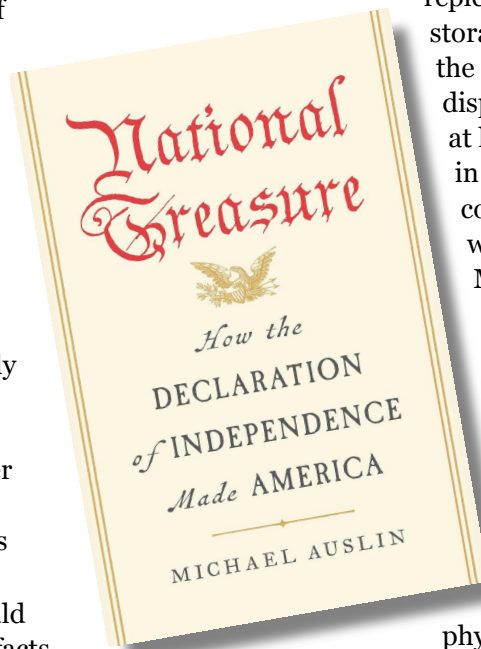
One historian, Stanford’s Michael Auslin, has taken a refreshingly different approach by telling the story of the physical document throughout our history. And it is an intriguing story, one replete with disappearances, changes in storage locations and deterioration of the parchment due to improper display. His most interesting chapter, at least to me, was his detective work in determining which is the original copy as well as the controversy over which date is the most significant. More on that anon.

“National Treasure: How the Declaration of Independence Made America” (Simon & Schuster 2026, 275 pages plus notes, \$29 hardcover at Amazon) traces the Declaration from its writing stage to the modern day, following the story through its location and physical condition across the

centuries.

The first question Auslin addresses is the search for the true version of what Congress passed. The lack of clarity in which version was the officially approved one is complicated in that the congressional record for that critical week is loaded with other routine business.

The chronology is thought to be this: On June 21, Thomas Jefferson’s first attempt was sent to the five-man drafting committee. This Auslin calls the “rough draft.” Then on June 28 the committee sent the document to Congress with its edits of Jefferson’s draft, Auslin’s “fair copy.”



On July 2, Congress voted to declare independence and then began its committee-of-the-whole editing process. Eighty-six individual edits were made and the full document was reduced in length by one-quarter. Most of the edits were directed at Jefferson's list of the king's usurpations but a few were in his most quoted second paragraph, improving his language and directly invoking the Creator as the source of rights. One might imagine Jefferson's resentment at these changes but then writers have always resented their editors.

On July 4, Congress adopted the Declaration almost unanimously; the New York delegation needed the approval of its state legislature, which came July 9.

Now here is where the uncertainty arises. The fair copy was altered by hand and no final copy was produced. Congressional secretary Charles Thompson did not insert a final version into his minutes of that day.

It is assumed that Jefferson walked the edited copy to a local printer, John Dunlap, who likely cut up the physical paper copy to distribute to his typesetters. Dunlap's proof copy contained several errors that were corrected before the "final" or engrossed copy was printed for distribution on Aug. 2.

The iconic signing ceremony never happened like the painting suggests and certainly not on July 4. By the time the engrossed copy was received on Aug. 2, several of the delegates had returned home or to the army and could not sign that day. Eventually most of the delegates' signatures were affixed.

One fascinating detail is the case of the errant "a." In the second paragraph the document text as approved claimed the right of the people to "institute new Government." The commissioned printer of the approved document, John Dunlap, apparently thought that the Congress meant to "institute a new Government" so inserted the indefinite article into the phrase, not appreciating the political storm this would produce among those who viewed each state as independent.

An unnamed proofreader caught and removed the errant "a" and political harmony was preserved. The contentious issue would be resolved

in 1787 at the Constitutional Convention in favor of a singular, unified government.

Why the poor historical record of this series of events with such historical impact? Auslin wonders if Congress considered the Declaration and its call to treason as routine by the July 4th vote or if its impact was already accepted as a *fait accompli*. He does report that there was significant and ultimately successful work behind the scenes to assure unanimity on independence, or at least near unanimity since John Dickenson and a few others thought it was too soon to take that step.

After the War for Independence, the engrossed Declaration document was moved continually and the outline of the book follows the Declaration document from one government department to another, most of which focused on preserving it as an archive rather than an exhibit for public display. There were frequent private viewings, each involving unrolling and rerolling the document with the risk of additional damage.

When the document was displayed, the science of the time had no ability to control for sunlight exposure or humidity variance. What is amazing is that the actual document never incurred mold damage.

Several wars required that the Declaration, along with other historical documents, be relocated to safer surroundings. The first was during the War of 1812 when it was removed to a brick safe in the cellar at an abandoned Virginia mansion. (No, it was not Dolley Madison who scurried with it out of Washington just ahead of the British army. It was State Department clerk Stephen Pleasonton who is the hero of this story.) It was also removed to safer locations during the Civil War and World War II.

Auslin does not ignore how the Declaration has been used by political movements to support their cause. Most are aware of the abolitionists' resorting to the Declaration's language about all men being created equal in their bid to end slavery but the Confederate states also appealed to the Declaration to justify their secession under the "consent of the governed" principle. Which application of the Declaration's language has precedence? It took a war to answer that question in favor of equality but the "consent of the governed" argument is being resurrected in our day.

Auslin does not lose sight of his focus. He traces the document across our nation's entire history, both in terms of its location after each transfer and in terms of its physical condition given the handling and transporting. For those with more of a scientific bent than I, the details about the construction of the frame and the gas used inside its sealed box will appeal. Long story short, it didn't help for the document to be stored subject to direct sunlight or with a lack of temperature and humidity control, but that was the level of environmental understanding in the past.

From being ignored to being stored to being displayed, it has survived wars, environmental challenges and, at times, neglect. Yet it survives and is now reverently displayed at the National Archives building where I had the privilege of seeing it several years ago when I was attending an American Legion national conference.

In the final analysis it is the words of the document that matter and the eternal principles they describe. Yet the physical document is a true relic of our republic, a visual reminder of what July 4 is all about. Auslin's book is aptly named.

Books in Brief

“Sparta: The Rise and Fall of an Ancient Superpower” by Andrew Bayless is a comprehensive history of that Greek polis from its origins in the quasi-mythological Dorian invasion of the Peloponnese sometime before 700 BC through the aftermath of Sparta's catastrophic military defeat at Leuctra in 371 BC. The Spartans are an enigma, generally considered a highly authoritarian, militaristic state yet one which had much of a republican form of government. We school children of the early Cold War years learned that democratic Athens was the ideal while Sparta reminded us too much of the Soviet Union. Bayless, although no fan of Sparta, is even-handed in his accounting for its rivalry with Athens. The problem for the modern reader is keeping track of all the major players in Spartan history, not nearly so well known as the Athenians. He also exposes the internal politics of Sparta which dictated its foreign policy and military expeditions. It was these domestic squabbles which ultimately sent Sparta on a downward spiral after its victory in the Peloponnesian War, a downward trajectory from

hegemony to irrelevancy in only a handful of decades. Bayless does a reasonably good job of explaining why the Spartans were as they were by providing insight into the community's daily life, social structures and political turmoil. Yet even after reading this book, Sparta remains an enigma of contradictions.

“1873: The Rothschilds, the First Great Depression, and the Making of the Modern World” by Liaquat Ahamed has an ambitious subtitle, to say the least. The book is structured as two histories being told in sync, that of the Rothschild family's rise to financial prominence and the economic boom and bust cycle that marked the last decades of the nineteenth century. Ahamed tells the Rothschild story in a near laudatory manner. He certainly approves of the family's internal cohesion and conservative financial management during the out-of-control speculation in the financial markets, especially railroad bonds and sovereign bonds issued by high-risk states such as Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. His account of the demonetization of silver and the so-called “Crimes of 1873” is most incisive, but then Ahamed is a former investment banker with World Bank experience who should understand international currency issues. His bias may show through in his suggestion that incredibly stupid financial decisions are crimes in any legal sense. (Personally, I prefer Milton Friedman's explanation of the silver vs. gold debate in his “Money Mischief: Episodes in Monetary History” for its impact on the American economy and electoral politics.) Ahamed's prose is crisp and he avoids going overboard with technical details. Still, some understanding of international economics will prove useful.

“Mastering the Four Arguments: The Classical Art of Persuasive Writing” by Gregory Roper is written both for students with writing assignments and their teachers. Roper, a college professor himself, has organized this like a textbook, including outlined summaries and templates for each section. The premise of the book is based on classical rhetoric and stasis theory, the methodology to carefully identify points of disagreement by beginning at, well, the beginning. His four arguments represent a sorting exercise to determine points of agreement and then debating at the first point of disagreement. The four

argument types are, in order: definitional, causal, evaluative and finally solutional. For each type Roper suggests a literary example, Shakespearean soliloquies for the first three and Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" to exemplify an argument toward a solution. (Seriously?) The book is written in a non-academic style but designed for an academic setting, college or perhaps high school. It can be a useful primer for students who don't know how to write persuasively and for experienced writers who could use additional discipline in their composition (like me).

"Scandalous Witness: A Little Political Manifesto for Christians" by Lee C. Camp is an unusual book. Camp's thesis is that Christians tend to misuse their faith in the political arena to justify worldly actions that violate Christianity's tenets, mixing religion and politics in a non-Christlike way.. He places the blame for this on both classical liberalism and progressivism, which he calls respectively "conservative liberalism" and "liberal liberalism." Camp's Anabaptist background is clearly the foundation for his political action agenda. He very much opposes Luther's two kingdom doctrine and is more in line with Augustine's two cities theology, although he never attributes nor examines this as such. It is a short book; however, all but the final chapter are indictments of Christians' misuse of faith in the political arena. While he claims to be non-partisan, his preference is to single out conservative believers more often than liberal ones for violations of this higher order understanding of the Gospel. One reviewer called the book "dense," a characterization I would endorse. — *Mark Franke*



Thomas Hoepker. Sept. 11.

The Outstater

In Defense of ALPR Cameras

(Sept. 5) — There's a big difference between the automated corner camera and the venerable corner policeman, an institution long recognized for accelerating investigations, raising crime clearance rates, locating missing people, reducing auto theft and generally keeping our streets safe for the law-abiding.

The difference? We can no longer afford the policeman.

His replacement, the much-hated camera, known as an Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) camera, is embarrassingly efficient. It is not subject to the political whims of public-sector unions or to high-minded defund-the-police initiatives. Plus it is racist, or at least there is concern it will result in disproportionate arrests of blacks.

Worst of all, the camera is an unabashed snitch willing to testify to any and all crime, a willingness lacking in certain neighborhoods. In short, the camera is politically incorrect, unwoke.

Thus our city council this week, under pressure from the mayor, voted unanimously to pull the cameras off the streets. In doing so, it negated a technology that would have lowered crime in our central city, thereby encouraging investment there and bringing in new jobs. All to protect the

supposed privacy rights of thugs committing crimes.

Whew. That's quite an achievement for a single vote. And the local media, boosterish by instinct, dutifully glossed over the documented cost of crime to the impoverished while applauding the imagined advance in civil rights. My assistant Grok, though, has second thoughts:

It is estimated that the cameras contribute to roughly 20–25 percent of solved/reported crimes in deploying jurisdictions. This includes homicides, shootings, robberies, kidnappings and high-volume ones like vehicle theft.

That is in addition to real-time alerts (stolen vehicles, wanted persons, missing people) that enable rapid interceptions. These include locating missing persons, recovering stolen cars, tracking suspects in multi-jurisdictional crimes and aiding in high-profile cases (e.g., Brown University shooting suspect). There are frequent reports that credit the cameras with solving murders, kidnappings, sex offenses and shootings that might otherwise go cold.

Analysis of ALPRs across 216 agencies found a roughly 11 percent drop in motor vehicle thefts in the year after deployment with vehicle-theft clearance/arrest rates rising about 16 percent.

And again, the cameras would multiply limited officer resources and raise the certainty of apprehension, which is the strongest deterrent factor in police work.

Finally, the supposed abuses seem to have more to do with an inept judicial system, a topic somehow left off the table, than the cameras themselves.

You can expect there will be a compromise to bring back the cameras with "guardrails," to wit, a guarantee that blacks are not pictured unequally (that most serious of crimes). It will employ an algorithm that puts an inordinate value on ALPR pictures of whites because . . . wait for it . . . they commit fewer crimes.

We are being ruled by idiots, dangerous ones.

Public ‘Service’ Understood

(Aug. 23) — I’m having trouble sorting out the Andy Zay settlement this week. Zay, a former state senator, describes himself as a “public servant.” As commissioner of the Indiana Utilities, though, he displeased his boss the governor and was fired, somewhat abruptly, then he sued the state for more than a half million.

But this is politics, not tiddlywinks. Wouldn’t grown-ups just agree to disagree and go their own way? A difference of opinion, a policy clash? Zay could run for governor if he feels that strongly about it.

Indeed, my first reaction to the firing was that we were witnessing a rare instance of decisiveness in the upper echelons of the GOP. Someone had actually drawn a clear policy line, right or wrong, about a critical issue, energy pricing.

So for what was the \$625,000, about one-fourth of it to the attorneys? For work Zay didn’t do after he was fired? For an insult? (Is it even possible to insult a politician, at least in the conventional sense?)

And Gov. Mike Braun, after handing over the fat check, issues a statement commending Zay: “I want to recognize Andy for his service to the state. Public service is demanding work, and I appreciate his contributions over the course of a decade on behalf of Hoosiers.”

So we are supposed to be the winners here, the ultimate beneficiaries of this flurry of public service? But the \$625,000 was our money, right? If Zay had been doing such a bang-up job, we could have saved a half million by keeping him at his post, plus the state’s legal fees.

We’re being “served” alright. The question is what.

Head Start Never Worked

(Aug. 20) — Can a failed program uphold a billion-dollar budget for decades? Yes, if it is run by the government and promises the impossible in the name of beautiful, vulnerable children.

That in a sentence is Head Start, the federal program created in 1965 with a pledge to provide school readiness for low-income children

from birth to age five. That has not been realized. Rather, the program has stood in opposition to more effective self-help programs for single mothers and troubled families.

“Federal mandates do not allow Head Start to adapt to provide parental counseling, an example of the unwillingness of liberals to strengthen the agency of the needy,” writes Robert Cherry, author of the upcoming “The State of the Black Family.” “They refused to support President Bill Clinton’s Welfare-to-Work initiatives that set in motion effective dynamics that transformed the lives for the better of poor single mothers”

I first came in contact with the program as a member of the board of my former church. We were asked to approve a Head Start school in the church building. The experience went downhill from there.

The Head Start representative, a proverbial expert from out of town, began the meeting by offering to not only pay the church rent but drop in a top-of-the-line playground, a security fence and provide free lawn care and snow removal. Out pastor was all in, snow removal being a particular headache for him.

There was one condition: Jesus Christ could not be mentioned in the church during the hours that Head Start was in operation.

To my astonishment, the pastor and several board members voiced agreement. Those of us opposed stated what we thought was the obvious, that is, Christ was the reason for the church building and all that went on there 24 hours a day.

Anyway, we lost the vote. The Head Start executive dismissed my more narrow policy arguments on efficacy with, “You just don’t like government.” That was true, I had to admit. But I also knew a little about Head Start.

For starters, I knew that its \$12-billion annual budget was built on the premise of the “blank slate,” that is, all human beings are the product solely of their environment, their upbringing. It denies that human minds are far from blank, that genes and evolutionary history cannot be ignored on command.

In regard to Head Start, this has been known for at least 16 years. That was when a randomized, controlled trial showed that any early gains in

school readiness among enrollees had faded by the end of first grade and were absent by third grade. The results were published without refutation by the Department of Health and Human Services. Subsequent attempts to discredit this “fadeout” effect have arguably failed or only muddled the issue with supposed social-leveling claims.

Most recently, the social researcher Heather Mac Donald wrote a blistering critique of Head Start for the Manhattan Institute, “Head Start Never Worked.” She notes that even if the program is the “best” of its type (because it fails less than similar programs, as the New York Times currently tries to argue) its costs are indefensible in relation to its results — \$20,000 per child for infants, toddlers and pregnant mothers, and \$15,000 per each pre-K student.

Mac Donald proposes an alternative — the nuclear family. “There is nothing that government social-uplift programs purport to accomplish that cannot be done better by parents,” she says. “Civil society must figure out a way to reknit the two-parent family, however daunting that task may be.”

The place to start is with society-wide acknowledgment that both mothers and fathers are crucially important to children, plus hands-on, practical guidance on raising children and strengthening the home and family — not lavishly funding government as a surrogate parent.

But some, alas, will choose free snow removal instead.

Custer’s Vindication and More

(Aug. 15) — We sorely miss the late Norman Van Cott, our curmudgeon and senior adjunct. Van Cott claimed to have wandered into an economics Ph.D. while looking for something more useful to do. Nonetheless, he left us with two sterling insights, one on the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the other on rabid do-goodism. First, the battle. Writing in the *Journal of Economic Education*, Van Cott noted that a primary source of military intelligence for the U.S. Army in 1876 was the count of Native Americans on reservations. Logically, the more warriors on the reservations should have meant fewer out on warpaths.

“But who counted the Indians?” the professor wanted to know.

The answer was government agents, according to a respected historian of the battle, Evan Connell. The reservation agents’ salaries varied directly with reservation populations. This provided an incentive for the agents to overstate the count.

In fact, the agents reported 37,391 Native Americans on reservations before the battle but a count afterward could find only 11,660. It is reasonable to believe, Van Cott argued, that Custer thought he was running to ground a relatively small party of warriors when in fact he was about to be surrounded by what may have been three times as many.

So, George Armstrong Custer was not done in by the white man’s arrogance or even incompetent or jealous senior officers, two of the more popular explanations. He was killed by a self-serving frontier bureaucracy.

Now to the do-goodism. Dr. Van Cott took mischievous pleasure in trolling a Muncie business’s annual clean-up day in which its employees were sent from their desks to go out into the community to pick up trash in parks, paint playground equipment, bag yard waste for the elderly, that sort of thing.

Van Cott would greet this self-congratulatory announcement by quoting Adam Smith’s “Theory of Moral Sentiments”: “It is not from the benevolence of the Butcher, the Brewer or the Baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.”

He would then explain that the company’s volunteer day actually was a net loss to the community, that in theory it would be better to keep the workers at their desks doing whatever it was they did in a normal work day.

Van Cott’s position was of course greeted by a flurry of outraged letters to the local newspaper. But I asked my assistant Grok to compare the economic value of the employees of a typical restaurant staying on the job with that of volunteering for community service. Grok estimates that Van Cott’s position was more valuable by magnitudes. Here is the comparison:

Restaurant Staying Open (one normal day)

- Daily revenue: Common benchmarks for an average or small independent restaurant are

around \$1,350 (~47 transactions at ~\$27 average ticket). More realistic for a typical neighborhood full-service/casual place is \$2,000–\$5,000 (higher for busier locations or weekends; some sources put new or average units higher still).

- Value created: Revenue is a lower bound on customer willingness-to-pay. Add consumer surplus (the extra value diners get above the price paid — often substantial for meals/experiences) plus producer surplus (wages, tips, and any profit). A conservative estimate of net economic value generated that day is still in the \$1,500–\$6,000+ range after accounting for food, labor, and other variable costs (prime costs often run 60–70 percent of sales). The full social value of the output is higher.

Closing for Park Trash Pickup

- Labor input: Assume 15–20 employees working a full day (or a substantial portion) on litter collection → roughly 100–150 person-hours.
- Valuing the labor: Independent Sector’s 2025 estimate of volunteer time is \$36.14 per hour nationally (based on average private-sector production/non-supervisory wages plus benefits). That puts a raw “value of time” of \$3,600–\$5,400. But this overstates the net social benefit of the cleanup, because these workers are not specialized in efficient litter removal and the activity replaces higher-value specialized work.

With those figures in hand, I can see Norman diving back into the letters-to-the-editor column with another quote from Adam Smith:

“Every individual neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. He intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote a (good) end which was no part of his intention.”

Rest in peace, Professor Van Cott. You and General Custer are fully vindicated.

Conspiracy or Stupidity, You Choose

(Aug. 13) — Our woes are not the result of a conspiracy — at least that’s what I keep telling myself. But there is a theory that nags at me. It involves the Cloward-Piven strategy and it works to raise the cost of social-justice programs to the point of societal ruin. More about that later.

The news clipping in front of me says that the Indianapolis city council this week overturned a veto by the mayor and approved \$356 million in new tax revenue to address road maintenance. Suggestions that alternative line items be cut to support such infrastructure were rejected.

What? For all these years Democrats have thought the roads were just maintaining themselves? Did they assume that the potholes were self-fulfilling?

This brings us to a tipping point, dear friends, at which we finally understand that those who push for higher taxes to pay for supposed social injustices (homeless “service centers,” government grocery stores, welfare for the able-bodied, affirmative action, Islamic centers, etc.) are unconcerned whether our society as a whole survives. Nor are they interested in solving the problems for which they crusade so compassionately. It is just one random emergency, crisis or outrage after another — all to be solved by increasing taxes or regulations.

This can’t be mere incompetence, something more serious is in play. The cynical will point to that neat little conspiracy theory mentioned earlier, the Cloward-Piven strategy. Let my assistant Grok explain it:

The strategy was outlined in 1966 by sociologists-activists Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven of Columbia University’s School of Social Work. The two were dismayed by how many people were eligible for public welfare benefits but were not collecting them.

They meant to reverse that, to organize a large-scale drive to enroll all eligible people onto the welfare rolls and help existing recipients claim their full legal benefits (plus special grants for the undocumented). They believed this would:

- *Overwhelm welfare bureaucracies with applications and demands.*

- *Create severe fiscal strain on local and state governments.*
- *Generate bureaucratic chaos and political crisis, especially in big cities.*

In fact, that's how it turned out. What was only a gleam in the eye of Cloward and Piven has given birth to total societal disruption. The Democratic Party's urban coalition (white intellectuals and the ethnically identified) has been activated. The party is being forced by its radical elements to respond with the disastrous proposal now before the electorate — specifically, communism.

Whoa, let's slow down here. Cloward-Piven aside, isn't the idea of a grand conspiracy a bit strong, a bit McCarthyesque? And the characterization of Indianapolis councilmen as "unconcerned" sounds like an overreach. Surely they mean well.

Well yes, perhaps, but they may not know that collectively we already pay more in total taxes than we spend on food, clothing and housing combined. In other words, they may just be stupid, unaware that they are impoverishing their constituency and destroying the economy.

Somehow this doesn't make me feel better.

Writing for Clicks

(Aug. 7) — Our book reviewer Mark Franke has written one of his customarily insightful essays, this one on "the end of reading." I commend it to your attention.

Franke cites a disturbing statistic: less than 50 percent of adults read a single book in 2022. Although I have no statistics, let me offer a corollary to his proposition. Let's call it "the end of writing." I put forward as evidence the work of James Briggs and Michael J. Hicks on the pages of the Indianapolis Star.

Reading either one, it is difficult to imagine that their crass style to meant to impress their peers in journalism (Briggs) or in academia (Hicks). They are smarter than that.

Rather, they are writing for "clicks," an impersonal, anonymous market-research metric where someone taps or clicks on any part of their digital articles

Clicks are the coin in which writing, or at least journalistic writing, now trades. Even the once staid Wall Street Journal lists daily its most clicked articles. The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette has a similar list as do most newsrooms, either overtly or tacitly. It is a high-tech version of newsboy hawking.

But clicks, please know, do not measure reader agreement, engagement or even comprehension. Rather, they measure passive viewing, merely the noticing.

And human nature being what it is, we notice most the negatives of life, the worst possible shading of our neighbors' motivations. Thus, fear-mongering, alarmism, innuendo, gossip and name-calling fill the modern journalist's tool box.

Tangentially, journalists today cannot imagine plying their trade without the disingenuity of the mock interrogative (are Republicans all racists?) or the need for the modal verbs should, must, ought.

There is continuous moralizing, admonishing readers on how to think, vote, talk and live. At the same time, there is only the most slavishly emollient packaging for the radical views of the "cool kids," the ideological Left.

Picture a school being run at the mean girls' lunch table.

It has not always been so. As a follower of the Lost Generation of writers, I know that Hemingway worried about what Fitzgerald, Pound, Joyce and the Bloomsbury Group thought of his work.

Scaling down from that considerably, we ink-stained wretches of the 1970s newsrooms were only dimly aware of what readers thought of us — the random nasty letter and the annual readership survey commissioned from the publisher's unemployed nephew. Rather, we were concerned about the respect of those at the proverbial "next desk," that is, our editors and colleagues.'

This respect had to be earned by producing work over time that was accurate, insightful, prescient and perhaps artful when the muse struck.

Briggs and Hicks need not worry about any of that, and they don't.

America: An Idea or Just a Place?

(Aug. 4) — There is a debate swirling around the candidacy of Vivek Ramaswamy, the GOP candidate for governor in neighboring Ohio. It is whether America is an idea or just a place. We can resolve it right here.

“America isn’t a place, it’s an idea.” Vivek Ramaswamy, July 1, 2021

First, as Vivek maintains, it is an idea, an incredibly successful idea, one that has proven so throughout the world for those peoples who have tried it.

Second, that idea was incubated in places, primarily of Anglo-Saxon heritage, where the sanctity of private property and rule by laws and not by men came to be adopted — so called “natural” laws that can be neither awarded nor denied by any legislature or court, king or president.

“And if (as an American) you reject that idea, then we don’t have a country left.” — Vivek Ramaswamy, Dec. 23, 2022

Both can be true at the same time, as when that idea is applied to places such as Singapore or more recently Argentina. Our Declaration of Independence spells it out for both those who would like to come here and for those who would like to try the idea in their own place.

Short of war, neither argument justifies crossing a border, refusing to assimilate and imposing the ideology of the place from which you emigrated.

Now, can we get back to weeding Indiana’s own tangle of laws and regulations before it becomes a place where personal liberty and the entrepreneurial spirit are squelched to a point Hoosiers start looking for somewhere else to go?

Our Government Grocery Store

(July 31) — We don’t understand the concern over New York City’s government grocery stores. It is said they are economically impossible, that is, you cannot price groceries at a 30 percent discount and somehow manage the 1-3 percent profit margins that characterize the industry.

But we have our own government grocery store in little Fort Wayne, Indiana, “the Pontiac Street Market.” The city helps oversee the \$3.4 million

project in a public-private partnership with a local nonprofit, all governed by a carefully selected, much-commended and diversity-minded board of directors.

The manager, LaQueisha Brown, says things are going great. There is no shoplifting or employee theft. The parking lot is safe even in one of the highest crime areas of the city. And it is making money hand over fist in what otherwise would be a food “desert” shunned by racist developers. The media have been fawning in their praise. They have seen the future and it works.

No, wait. We don’t know any of that for sure. In fact, in two years of asking we have been unable to get an independent fiscal report on the grocery’s operations despite notes to city officials and calls to our city councilman.

Hmmm.

Indiana’s Law School Quotas

(July 27) — Call us silly but we had assumed that Indiana applicants, academic credentials being equal, would have priority at the tax-supported Maurer School of Law in Bloomington. We were wrong.

Some time ago we asked an adjunct scholar of the foundation, at the time a member of the law school’s admissions committee, to review the school’s policies on race-based admissions. His report to us, which was featured in the Indianapolis Star, prompted discussion among alumni. The law school, however, insisted it did not have “quotas” per se, and that was that.

But our man brought receipts. His memorandum to the dean made these points:

- The admissions committee maintained a de facto quota for a minimum number of certain minority students in each entering class.
- To meet that target, the committee routinely leap-frogged minority applicants with weaker credentials over more accomplished, higher-credentialed non-minority applicants. Heidt described I.U. as unusually willing (compared with nearly all other ABA-approved schools) to admit minority applicants with relatively poor credentials.
- More than 75 percent of the lower-standard minority admits were from out of state.

- In some years the admit/deny ratio for minority applicants was substantially more favorable than for non-minorities (e.g., two admitted for every one denied).
- One year the school admitted 67 students with LSAT scores below 150.

He eventually stopped participating in the admissions process. Here was the summary of his report to us: (1)

“Minority enrollment at I.U.-Bloomington has stayed steady at about 16 percent year in and year out for each of the last seven years and steady at 21 to 23 percent for the four years before, while the number of minority applicants has varied widely year to year. But whether any private plaintiff can overcome the expense and difficulty of proving that we employ quotas is something else again. With no possibility of a referendum against racial preferences like those that prevailed in California and Washington, Indiana’s policy is only likely to change if the state legislature or an enlightened administrator outside the law school insists that it change.”

Did that happen? Have quotas been scrapped? We don’t know. What we learned from the exercise was that even when confronted with internal data the university could not be trusted to tell the full truth. The woke demand for diversity at all costs was too strong — and is still strong. The suspicion remains that white Hoosiers are denied admission to the school in favor of lower scoring blacks and other minorities. The school does not willingly provide admission details that would decide the point one way or another.

Now a full data base of student records for at least one law school, Columbia University, is circulating on the Internet. If valid, we can extrapolate from it the likely implications of the I.U. admissions policy.

To help with that is an article, “The Hidden Arithmetic of Affirmative Action,” in the blog Right Rationalism. (2) It summarizes the Columbia data and finds that there were only two top-quartile black graduates at the school between 2007 and 2016. Again, if you take into account that the I.U. law school doesn’t get the same pick of black law students as does Columbia, it is plausible that some

years there were zero black graduates in Maurer’s top quartile.

Please know that Maurer is a ways down on the ranking scale (49th compared with Columbia’s 9th). And it is estimated that if selected on academic talent alone even Yale Law School would admit less than 1 percent of black applicants. Indiana law school classes are still about 20 percent minority, according to my assistant Grok.

But the Internet sources may be wrong or misleading. Maurer may have been admitting students entirely on merit all this time. Or not. Unaccountable administrators may be skewing admissions to conform to their personal social vision. Again, we can’t trust the university’s word for it. We need an audit, especially after a 2023 Supreme Court decision restricting the use of race in admissions.

Indiana governors have broad authority over the university system. In addition to appointing trustees, a governor can launch audits and investigations and issue executive orders. Yet, five Republican governors have now been made aware of charges that administrators are manipulating admission standards at Maurer to the exclusion of otherwise qualified applicants.

Arbitrarily denying someone entry into a profession because of race is a serious matter. We are not a serious people apparently.

- (1) Robert Heidt, J.D. “At Issue: Indiana University School of Law at Bloomington.” *The Indiana Policy Review*, p. 28, summer-fall 2003. (This work is not digitized but held in the foundation’s archive of physical journals).
- (2) Werner Zagrebbski. “The Hidden Arithmetic of Affirmative Action.” *Right Rationalism*, June 30, 2026.

Women Journos Under Stress

(July 19) — An Indianapolis editor is crusading for more gentlemanly treatment of female journalists. She says they are being merciless trolled by online critics, suspiciously male. After a generation of “I am woman; hear me roar,” we aren’t going to put that on our worry list.

An editor for the Capital Chronicle cites a United Nations study finding that 81 percent of

black women journalists experienced online harassment as did 64 percent of white women journalists. That percentage climbs to 85 percent of lesbian and 86 percent of bisexual journalists.

Not that you would doubt United Nations data (New Jersey should drop into the Atlantic any day now), there might be an explanation other than sexual bias. Perhaps the frustration with women journalists has something to do with the strain of journalism they produce.

I'm not going to insult you by including a "some of my best friends are women journalists" disclaimer. My argument rests on averages and patterns in a specific profession, not on individuals. I just reject the absurd notion that in 2026 female journalists require special consideration.

You don't have time for me to list the number of women heading up newsrooms in Indiana. Leave it to say that the Indianapolis Star, the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, the Capital Chronicle and the Indianapolis Business Journal are led by influential females at the highest levels — and they have been for three decades now. and they have uniformly adopted the curated liberal orthodoxy.

Interestingly, those are the very decades when public trust in the media fell from 72 percent to below 30 percent.

A coincidence? Helen Andrews, author of "Boomers: The Men and Women Who Promised Freedom and Delivered Disaster," notes that journalism is one of a growing number of prestige professions that has now tipped majority female. So yes, that coincides with the decline in the believability of print, electronic and Internet media.

Cause, of course, is not correlation. And Andrews is careful to say that women are not less talented than men or even that female modes of interaction are inferior in any objective sense. Moreover, there are many professions and industries in which women clearly excel. Andrews only says that women think differently — better in some contexts, not better in others.

To use an Andrews example, if a business loses its swashbuckling spirit and becomes a feminized, inward-focused bureaucracy (Budweiser, Cracker Barrel), it will shed investors. It is a simple observation, Andrews concludes, "that female

modes of interaction are not well suited to accomplishing the goals of many major institutions."

Mass media is one of them.

Granted, age has skewed my perspective on this. As a young reporter on the night side of a metropolitan daily, I recall a colleague being fired on his two-way radio for hesitating to interview on scene the mother of a beheaded murder victim. And the city editor regularly climbed on top of his desk (with cowboy boots on) to shout obscenities across a sea of desks to some ink-stained wretch falling behind on deadline. There were pints of whiskey in bottom drawers, and yes actual spittoons. But Pulitzer Prizes meant something.

For the primary value of journalism is prescience. News reporting, when it was successful in that regard, concentrated on absolutes and facts, not on feelings and relationships. The legendary Bob Bartley, editor of the Wall Street Journal editorial page, related the journalist to a primordial man at the fireside who could remember and therefore predict the most productive game trails for the next day's hunt.

Andrews is more direct; "If your journalists aren't prickly individualists who don't mind alienating people, what good are they?" Readers want to know where crime is occurring no matter who might be offended, what the weather is going to be, who voted to raise taxes, whose team is going to win — absolutes and facts, again, not feelings or relationships. Red Smith, the consummate sports columnist, would not write about anything that had not happened on the playing field or race track, no locker room gossip or front office politics, no interviews on how a wide receiver feels about the national anthem.

Disagree with this analysis as you will, but it is specious for women journalists to call on chivalry to shield them from criticism now that feminism has marched through their institution and put them in charge. In any case, the industry has more serious problems than the hypersensitivity of those who choose to make a living under a byline and a studio headshot. Addressing them can start by understanding how chasing Internet clicks has transformed journalists into packs of negativist, egomaniacal and now whining social marauders.

Hooray for Rokita, Braun

(July 17) — Two more of the issues in our latest “Indiana Mandate” were taken up this week: The U.S. House wisely chose a single time standard and, more importantly, Indiana rejected socially ruinous affirmative action.

Todd Rokita, Indiana Attorney General, issued a formal opinion stating that race and sex-based components of state contracting programs are unconstitutional. Relying on this opinion, Gov. Mike Braun announced the end of the Diversity Business Enterprises Program, replacing it with a colorblind, merit-based system. Now, let us hope this common sense can be applied to the state’s university system.

It is an irony that a nation built on the principle that “all men are created equal” would develop tiers of citizenship. The 1964 Civil Rights Act, as it morphed into perpetual affirmative action, became in effect a second constitution. No thoughtful person of any race or sex could imagine that such preferential treatment would end well. The writers of the Constitution would approve of the recent reversal of this drift by the U.S. Supreme Court, the institution they created for just such a purpose.

A majority of Americans positively view diversity in their schools and places of work, yet they object to affirmative action as a means to achieve it. Depending on the poll, between 65 and 85 percent oppose using race as a criterion for school and job admittance. The outlook for the nation is grim if most of us are frustrated by the unjust requirements of diversity initiatives and the others determined to ever strengthen the use of government and corporate power to institutionalize them.

The economist Thomas Sowell observed that affirmative action is not simply a transfer of benefits or preference from one group to another. There also can be a net loss when, as a result, both groups do less than their best, and a zero-sum game becomes a negative-sum game.

Looking at data from Cornell University, where Sowell once taught, he explained: “If Harvard admitted students according to a purely academic index, blacks would make up 0.76 percent of admissions rather than the actual 15 percent.

Boosting the former number not the latter should be the primary concern of public policy.”

It’s still not clear how Indiana colleges and corporations will react to the latest affirmative action ruling by the high court, *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. vs. President and Fellows of Harvard College*. The decision held that using race in college admissions violates the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th amendment, reversing 45 years of precedent set in the *Bakke* case.

Our more woke colleges no doubt will continue to engineer disparity of some degree between groups in regard to college admissions, using “essays that provide insight into students’ values and life experiences,” as allowed by the ruling.

But in Indiana, at least, government hiring and contracting practices will now reject such a duplicitous strategy. It is about time.

Indiana’s Muslim Test

(July 14) — The need to confront the Muslim scourge in our cities is dividing the Republican Party — or so you would expect. In Indiana, however, only Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith is speaking out while other GOP leaders sit silent for fear that Julia Carson’s grandson, Andre, will call them bigots.

Indeed, the governor upbraided Beckwith for not choosing his words more carefully, for not thinking before he speaks.

OK, if the governor wants a careful word choice, how about “seditious”? That’s when you demand that your religion exempts you from a society’s norms, mores, laws and core beliefs to the degree that you would overturn them to be replaced with your own.

Freedom of religion? Do you think the Founders had in mind someone like Genghis Khan, a devout follower of Tengrism, the shamanic religion that worships “the Eternal Blue Sky.” His armies killed as many as 40 million people, estimated to be 11 percent of the world’s population at the time.

It is terrifying to realize that the leading minds of our GOP are willing to abide an openly hostile, globally controlled Islam as a benign curiosity. Look, there are reasons nobody immigrates to the 50 or so Muslim-majority nations. Our governor should be made aware of them.

Islamism's allies of moment are the suicidally empathetic and the opportunistically socialist. They can only triumph if nobody stands in their way. And you don't need to be a student of the Qur'an to know that both history and common sense testify to its incompatibility with "the Great Satan" America. In fact, Islam's world leadership, stuck in the 7th century, tells us that daily in its chanted promises of "death to America."

If that word choice is not clear enough, consider that the more gimlet-eyed political observers anticipate a Muslim mayor of Indianapolis in the next few election cycles, with the current slate of leftist Democrats setting the stage. Biden-era refugees from Somalia, Iran, Syria, etc., have burgeoned the unassimilable Muslim population, estimated as high as 23,000 in the Indianapolis metro area. A political pact with blacks and Median-Kessler progressives could swing a Democrat primary there.

Beckwith has been the sole voice warning of all this. His recent proposal to ban the purely demonstrative, disruptive and arguably political Muslim calls to prayer (don't they have cell phones?) should be seriously addressed.

You know that Beckwith is onto something by the outrage he has generated in the ever-woke executive suites of the Indianapolis Star. The newspaper has unleashed its attack columnist, James Briggs, who would place Beckwith somewhere just this side of the Ku Klux Klan. And in a lengthy opinion piece ordered up by senior editors, the Star employed the Council on American-Islamic Relations to say that Beckwith "is exploiting his office to fear-monger and spread misinformation."

No, the United States is a Christian nation and has every right to remain so. Our friend Gary Varvel makes that case in the current Indiana Policy Review. Last month, more than a hundred foundation members heard Varvel's full presentation at our seminar in Indianapolis. Nobody from the governor's office was able to attend — busy, one must assume, choosing their words carefully.

Civilizing our 'Youths'

(July 8) — The reality is that a couple of generations of urban juveniles have not been

socialized — have not been civilized, if you will. The solutions are difficult but generally understood. The problem is in what sequence they should be applied.

Both Indianapolis and Fort Wayne experienced multiple shootings over the July 4 weekend involving numbers of "youths," the media code for fatherless black teenagers running amok at 1 o'clock in the morning. Officials were quick to express sympathy for the families involved (of both victims and perpetrators, interestingly). And inanimate objects, e.g., guns, were mentioned of course.

But the emphasis from the official podiums (besuited apparatchiks standing behind the mayors like bowling pins) was on how we can help these young men find a place in civil society. The leading Democratic candidate for Indy mayor is building a platform on that plank.

That is a proper emphasis. The question, though, is whether it should be the first emphasis. Victor Hugo's observation that to civilize a man you must begin with his grandmother is pertinent here. The policies the mayors like to run up the flag pole will take years, possibly generations to take hold, and then with only a fraction of the delinquent population.

That's the soft, indefinite approach. The hard, immediate one is to enforce society's laws regardless of political context. Nothing gets an errant juvenile's attention (and that of his mother) like seeing the thug down the street behind bars on serious charges.

Parents need to know that their sons will be held accountable to society's basic standards, that is, they will not be given a pass by a woke prosecutor or judge because of irrelevant social grievances of one sort or another. "Westside Story" was a musical, not a societal blueprint — and Black Lives Matter was a fraud, literally.

In all, we liked the response of Tom Vaughn, the Republican candidate for Marion County sheriff. This week he told listeners of the "Hammer and Nigel Show" (WIBC) that there is no such accountability. Officers pick up the same juveniles weekend after weekend because they get released with few consequences. He questioned why juveniles should be on the street at 1 a.m. for any reason.

Iron-clad curfews, not a sociology lecture, would seem the place to start.

Not a Traitor Exactly

(June 30) — Democratic “representation” has lost any meaning. This year, 90 percent of representatives to the U.S. House will be determined before a general election, that is, gerrymandering will allow our “representatives” to choose who they “represent.”

Mulling this upside-down state of affairs, the question occurs: Can we even define who we are not? Can anybody be called a “traitor” anymore? I have a test case.

The positions and statements of 7th District U.S. Rep. Andre Carson are not traitorous, at least in a legal sense. That is so even if put in place they would mean the end of the United States as a nation. We would exist only as a cultural/economic zone open to plunder by opposing nations that had the good sense to maintain their identity.

Specifically, Carson says that anyone who manages to set foot on U.S. soil has made a “home” here, has a right to stay and enjoy the benefits of citizenship indefinitely. Carson will only say that U.S. borders should be “safe,” whatever he means by that.

Look, no nation can survive Carson’s vision, as no nation could survive the amassing of a hostile and overwhelming foreign army.

But merely advocating actions that would destroy the U.S. does not prove the case. The legal definition of treason, the only crime specifically defined in the Constitution, is narrow so that it cannot be used as a political weapon.

To convict, it would have to be proven that there was intent to betray the U.S. plus concrete acts that provide material help to a specific enemy. Again, Carson’s sympathies, speeches or actions that merely mean the destruction of the U.S. without intent to aid such an enemy do not qualify.

It is unclear why a hypothetical action (legislation) initiated by a Muslim officeholder that would directly favor one or another of the Islamic nations engaged in hostility against America does not qualify, but I am told they would not.

Still, let’s step back to consider what this means. To be technically innocent of treason is a mighty low bar for holding high office. That Andre Carson “represents” Indiana, with tacit gerrymandered support from the Republican leadership, is to our great shame. History will not be kind to us.

Common Sense Catches Up

(June 26) — Thirty years ago, George Witwer, a founding scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation and now CEO of Cavo Health, won a dark-horse race for the GOP nomination for lieutenant governor at a contested state convention.

He did so campaigning on the floor, delegate-by-delegate, with a simple argument, “Property taxes mean you never really own your property, you merely rent it.” We highlighted it in our book, “Indiana Mandate: An Agenda for the 1990s.”

This week, the GOP wrote Witwer’s principle into its platform, endorsing the elimination of the property tax, albeit timidly: “In the pursuit of eliminating property taxes, we direct the General Assembly to take up the measure in the next general session.”

Should we worry about a leadership — spanning the governorships of Mitch Daniels, Mike Pence and Eric Holcomb, and including 14 years as a legislative supermajority — that takes three decades to recognize such a core principle as the sanctity of property?

Speed (Variance) Kills

(June 23) — There’s an easytwo-step way of determining in real time whether Indiana government is functioning as intended. You will not need a library of economic and public-policy books. You need only take a Sunday drive, preferably after a spring thaw and at a midpoint between elections.

The first step is to note the potholes and the stretches of poorly maintained highway. Please know that ensuring the smooth movement of commerce is one of government’s most fundamental responsibilities.

Leave it to say that the roads should be high on the list of budget priorities. Rough roads tell you that state and local government are fudging

that responsibility. While inflation and recent gas-tax suspensions have created funding pressures, nobody has seen fit to tap lower spending priorities to fill the gap. Major road projects are pushed back years.

Relatedly, Indiana constructs its roads mainly with the old design-bid-build approach rather than a “life of the road” approach using long-term contracts as is done in Europe. That can mean more and frequent repairs because contractors spend less on a solid roadbed than if they were going to be held accountable for longterm surface repairs.

Again, the core problem with roads is a political unwillingness to set priorities and pull money necessary for repairs from popular schemes that can be touted at election time. Infrastructure is not politically sexy.

A caveat: Proving categorically that the roads at any given time are worse than they have been all along would require an unprecedented degree of transparency and cooperation from government itself. But like I suggested, just take a Sunday drive.

Now to the second step, one that may be difficult for us classical liberals. On your Sunday drive, set the cruise control to the speed limit. Count how many cars pass you and how many you pass. The ratio is 20:1 on my home stretch of I-69 where I see semi trucks routinely barreling through construction zones at 80 m.p.h.

Where are the police? Well, maintaining the speed limit is hard, expensive work but let's look at the public-policy implications.

High speeds are not the killer in traffic accidents. Indeed, modern roads can safely handle speeds far greater than the posted limits. What kills people is the speed differential, that is, some cars going fast and some going slow.

When budget pressures or just civic laziness relax enforcement, then the speeders are free to go whatever speed they wish, setting up a libertarian ideal but a nightmare accident scenario. My assistant, Grok, tells me that research shows that such varying highway speeds (speed dispersion or variance within the traffic stream) is a stronger indicator of higher crash rates than average or absolute speed alone, particularly for the likelihood of crashes.

What we may have now with lax enforcement is called the “Solomon Curve.” That is a chart showing risk is lowest for vehicles traveling near the average traffic speed and rises sharply for those deviating significantly faster or slower. This creates a U-shaped curve: both very slow and very fast drivers relative to the flow have elevated involvement rates.

The reason is obvious. Reaction times are constricted when greater speed differences lead to more lane changes, overtaking, merging issues and rear-end or sideswipe risks. Uniform speeds, on the other hand, improve flow predictability and reduce conflicts.

And that, dear friends, is why a civilized society, individual freedom granted, must find the will and the means to enforce speed limits, not that high speeds would be particularly more dangerous but to ensure that traffic is not traveling at random speed which is dangerous, especially on bad roads.

A Murder Most Random

(June 22) — It was my fault. Even after a gracious interview with a Capital Chronicle columnist, Stacey Compton, I didn't get my point across, the ideological gap being just too wide. I wanted to object to the reflexive description in recent murder stories of black-on-white violence as “random.” It is anything but that.

In its statistical context, the word means “being governed by or involving equal chances for each item.” That would not describe the National FBI Supplementary Homicide report that shows whites killed by blacks outnumber the reverse by two-to-one. And the National Crime Victimization Survey shows that blacks account for a disproportionate share of crime against whites relative to population share. Tragic, yes, but not random.

And granted, there is a wide range of theories about why that is so, some scientific and others specious. But the point, again, is that even though these crimes may be indeterminate, few think they are random. Nonetheless, we get the headline, “How Indy Newsrooms Covered a Random and Fatal Shooting Downtown.”

Let's break down the coverage of this case in particular, that of Brett Scroggum, a 23-year-old recent Indiana University graduate shot in the

head in a downtown Indy parking garage on his way to meet family at a baseball game.

In their use of “random,” had the editors, without seeing a whit of evidence or having heard a word of testimony, somehow ruled out robbery or, heaven forbid, racial animosity bred into a generation of adolescents? Or finally, did they think the dead man was merely unlucky, at the wrong place at the wrong time?

None of that. They were clinging to a narrative, trying to hide a pattern of behavior that does not fit comfortably into a world view of innate equality and interchangeable cultures. It is why even at-large suspects considered a threat are not identified racially — bad optics, it is thought. As I told Ms. Compton, the coverage is not so much biased as it is curated orthodoxy, a member of one race or group not being allowed to be seen as different (either more harmless or more dangerous) than another.

Wikipedia tells me that the intellectual arguments in support of this orthodoxy are familiar, simplistic even. The over-representation of certain races in the criminal justice system is routinely blamed on socioeconomic factors such as poverty, exposure to poor neighborhoods, inferior housing, poor access to early education, harmful chemicals, pollution and of course discrimination.

More complex are the formal academic theories attempting to explain inordinate black-on-white violence: conflict theory, strain theory, general strain theory, social disorganization theory, macrostructural opportunity theory, social-control theory, subcultural theory and so forth and so on.

Jim Briggs of the Indianapolis Star, always a bellwether for the corporate media flock, tells his readers that the Scrogam murder was even less than random, it was incidental. “Yes, homicides happen,” Briggs lectures us. “They sometimes happen downtown. They sometimes happen to people who were just going to a game.”

All of this camouflaging of the most serious of crimes does nothing to preserve public order, one of government’s primary responsibilities. An

honest editor worried about his or her community would want to address the numbers head-on and assess crime strategies with a gimlet eye — every strategy, including the prosecution regardless of socioeconomic assumptions or identity politics.

It won’t happen. Evaluating policy remedies rather than just blaming inanimate objects (guns) would require hard work, including historical and comparative research, plus it would challenge the preconceived notions of powerful people. Lazy journalism, you see, is merely another bad choice.

The Fraud of Official Art

“Whenever I hear the word ‘culture,’ I reach for my Luger.”

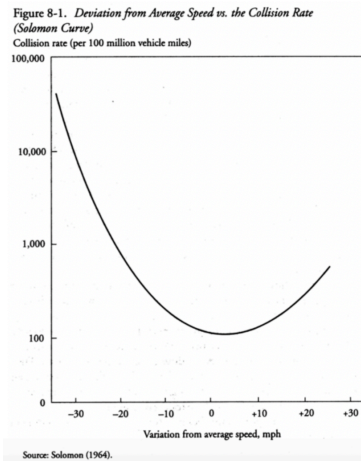
— Hermann Göring

(June 17) — The mayor this week unveiled “The Garner,” our city’s latest acquisition of outdoor art. It is shown above so you can judge for yourself but let me say I find it hopelessly abstruse. It took even the artist himself, Sacho Primo, the winner of a global competition for goodness sake, considerable effort to describe it:

“The installation is composed of six ascending metal arches that reflect the neighborhood’s industrial identity while symbolizing collective growth toward the future. Its organic upward movement evokes a tree growing within the park, creating a bridge between industry and nature. Oriented toward the historic Harvester factory tower, the sculpture establishes a visual dialogue with this iconic building.”

Do you see it? The visual dialogue? The bridge between industry and nature? The organic movement? Of course not. It’s a \$20,000 curated fraud, so ugly it defies defacement.

There was a time, please know, when art was honest. The talent and careful study of the artist made a sunset beautiful, a pastoral scene restful, a portrait expressive. The artist, and not the viewer, was expected to put in the hard work to make it so.



There is an example of the classic school across town. It is a majestic bronze sculpture depicting my city's namesake Gen. Anthony Wayne riding to war. The viewer needs no explication. It is clearly a man in a mid-18th century military uniform on a horse. The viewer can even tell from the art whether or not the general was only injured in the battle (one hoof off the ground) or died (two hoofs off the ground).

This distinction between the two types of art is important in gauging public policy. An administration that commissions tens of thousands of dollars of art that nobody can understand is an administration that will tax your city to ruin.

An overreach? One of the great municipal thinkers didn't think so. The late Roger Starr, a renowned urban planner and the housing commissioner for New York City, wrote a book about it. In the "The Rise and Fall of New York City," Starr put forward the thesis that the elite of a city can get so caught up in the "all is relative" spirit of nonobjective art that they lose sound judgment, tempting financial calamity:

"I suggest that when the institutional leaders of a city make modern painting and sculpture their

most prized art form, and when they devote as much time, intelligence and, not least, money to its pursuit as the New York leaders of the postwar world did, they demonstrate a set of values that endangers those needed to keep an urban polity on a firm, reasonable and safe course."

So here we are, our parks and open spaces filling with expensive nonsense.

Still, a few years ago we enjoyed some poetic relief. Prior to the unveiling of "The Garner," the pride of City Hall was "Helmholtz," a 10-ton reddish orange example of Soviet "girder art" that passing motorists regularly mistook for a train wreck.

And ironically, in the wee hours one morning, "Helmholtz," standing proudly in the downtown square, buckled in a low-speed crash. It turned out to be no match for a more reality-based work of art, a 2013 GMC Sierra truck, crafted by the uncultured at the local auto plant. Helmholtz incurred \$30,000 in damages, the GMC Sierra only a dent.

At the wheel, we speculate, was an art critic.
— *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

Established January 1989