

Statehouse Watch

Analysis of Potential Election Twists

By Rebecca Patrick

One thing is for certain: There will be many new faces in the 2013 Indiana General Assembly. At a minimum, 24 (20 in the House and four in the Senate) – that’s how many races feature no incumbent.

Of those 24 seats, expect only a third of them to be competitive, says Jeff Brantley, vice president of political affairs and head of the Indiana Business for Responsive Government political action committee for the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. Call it the perks of being in charge of redistricting.

“Certainly they (the Republicans) didn’t draw the majority of these districts to be competitive. But until you see how candidates match up, that can change,” he notes. “And this is where the real battle will be – in the open races. There won’t be many incumbents at risk of losing their seats.”

Quorum proof

The fight, it appears, will be over the size of the Republican majority. In the House, many are speculating whether Republicans can *gain* the seven seats needed for a quorum-proof majority. This would allow them to proceed with business without the Democrats, if necessary. The question in the Senate is if Republicans can *hold* their quorum-proof majority.

There will be an effort by the minority party in the Senate, Brantley suggests, to win enough Republican seats (four) to take away the current quorum-proof power (37-13), but he still feels that’s unlikely to happen in November.

As for the other possibility, “There is a path for the Republicans (current 60-40 advantage) to get to a quorum-proof majority in the House – and it’s no secret they are going to go for it,” believes Indiana Chamber President and CEO Kevin Brinegar. “I think it’s maybe a 25% chance that Republicans can pick up the seven seats needed, but as of today (early August) it’s hard to handicap because there are so many aspects at play.”

For House Speaker Brian Bosma, it’s the size of his majority caucus that will be decided; meanwhile new interim House Minority Leader Linda Lawson looks to stem the tide.

Bauer ouster

One of those moving parts is the late July overthrow of longtime House Democratic Leader Pat Bauer from his role, both as head of his caucus and chief campaign strategist.

“It appears part of the disagreement was over campaign tactics – whether to drive resources to defend a small group of incumbents or to gamble by supporting some pretty good Democrat first-time candidates in open seats and against Republican incumbents. Tough call either way,” Brinegar offers.

“It’s ironic. After the huge high-profile battle over right-to-work this year, school choice scholarships last year and other reforms, the Democrats and their traditional backers – the unions – are actually split going into the election,” he asserts.

“By all accounts, they should have been energized and together. Instead, even the different unions chose sides in the Bauer issue.”

It remains to be seen how the critical issue of fundraising is affected. “Will a new team for the House Democrats be appealing to donors or will they be seen as fractured and a lost cause, making it harder to raise money?” Brantley wonders.

He also is curious to see the impact of new interim minority leader Linda Lawson.

“The House Dems have selected one of their most liberal, business-hostile incumbents to be their leader. Meanwhile, the Democrats’ top-of-the-ticket candidates for Indiana (Joe Donnelly for U.S. Senate and John Gregg for governor) are positioning themselves as moderate, inclusive and pro-jobs,” Brantley contrasts.

“Also, she hails from Lake County, where the Republicans are likely to have several new,





Voter turnout – plus the dynamics of independents and ticket-splitters – is a key factor, particularly in the competitive open seat races.

competitive challengers to House seats. Will the House Dems focus on protecting Lake County Democrats first to prevent any GOP wins in that county, as opposed to incumbents elsewhere?”

Landscape and key races

Four years ago, Indiana voted for Barack Obama and gave Mitch Daniels a historic victory margin.

“Even if you argue it’s a Republican-leaning state, it’s an independent Republican-leaning state,” Brantley cautions.

“For example, in Southwest Indiana, you have Trent VanHaften against Wendy McNamara. Trent used to serve in the Indiana House; Wendy is a freshman legislator. That will be a key race, as will the race to the north of it that is an open-seat contest in Princeton – featuring Tom Washburne vs. Mark Norton. Those will be a dynamic in that part of the state.”

Adds Brinegar, “The seat Rep. Peggy Welch holds is now much more of a Morgan County seat than a Monroe County seat, so that could be a competitive race.”

Brantley suggests also keeping an eye on the Central Indiana open seats, those in the Indianapolis TV market. “Voters in that area are much more independent-minded and although they are conservative, they are not as socially conservative as they are in other parts of the state.

“Some of the rhetoric on social issues, whether it’s reproductive rights or the defense of the marriage amendment, plays differently in Indianapolis than around the state. It’s not going to affect who controls the Legislature but it could affect the (Republican) scale,” he surmises.

Atop the ticket and turnout

The presidential election and who decides to stay at home are expected to have a similar trickle-down on the sheer numbers for Republicans.

“When you look at Republican-leaning independents or undecided voters, about two-thirds of them are evangelicals; one-third of evangelicals will not under any circumstance, they tell pollsters, vote for a Mormon (like Romney),” Brantley advises. “It’s a small piece, but in a close election that’s a percentage point or two. It can matter. It may not swing Indiana to Obama, but it will impact other races. Will evangelicals get excited

about Romney?”

Conservatives right now have significantly higher engagement numbers and are better organized at the grassroots level. On the other hand, one in five Hoosiers are hard independents. “It’s a dangerous strategy to assume these independents are going to come out in droves to vote against Obama and his party. They are proud to split tickets.”

So what does this foretell for state legislative candidates?

“You better have your act together and stand for something. You better be able to answer the question from voters about why do I want to elect you ... what are you going to do for me. And most importantly, what are you going to do about promoting economic prosperity,” Brinegar suggests.

“We, as an organization, need to remind them (the candidates) that Hoosiers are as supportive as they ever have been of the free enterprise system. They want jobs and want policies that will put people back to work. They want economic growth and they do not believe government regulation is the solution.”

Parting thoughts

Much of the first half of the 2012 legislative session was spent – often times contentiously – on right-to-work. Brantley says the policy is clearly popular with voters.

“It’s to the point where, in a number of key races, if the whole campaign was about right-to-work, our candidate would clearly win. The freedom angle has always resonated, but we

Indiana Prosperity Project Offers Voter Education

Do your employees have a grasp on the business issues of the day? Do they go to the polls on Election Day with knowledge regarding how their votes will impact the company they work for – and ultimately their jobs?

To better prepare Indiana’s businesses and their employees, the Indiana Chamber is launching a redesign of its Indiana Prosperity Project web site (www.indianaprosperty.org).

“The new Indiana Prosperity Project is designed to help educate employers and employees on business issues, candidates and the electoral process – to make them better informed voters,” says Indiana Chamber Vice President of Political Affairs Jeff Brantley.

The site will provide more political news, be connected to social media outlets as well as act as a hub for various resources to educate the public, including voting records and candidate updates.

In addition, interested businesses have the option of generating more engagement with their employees – from e-mail communication on policies to a branded company web site with all the pertinent information.

To sign up or learn more about this free service, contact Indiana Prosperity Project coordinator Ryan McNicholas at (317) 264-7513 or rmcnicholas@indianachamber.com.





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can already point to this new law creating jobs too. Right-to-work is even less controversial than the education reforms that passed in 2011.”

Brinegar takes a final look at the big picture for the legislative races and leaves something to ponder.

“If no incumbent loses, you’ll have roughly 40% of the Indiana House that’s only been in office for no more than one term, or two years. What does that mean for policy priorities and the politics of the body? Some will think it’s great and others will be nervous about it,” he assesses.

“It’s an opportunity to elect great people and to further drive reform, but it’s also a risk. ... You have to make sure candidates are prepared to come and do things to better the state and the lives of Hoosiers overall.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Kevin Brinegar and Jeff Brantley, Indiana Chamber, at www.indianachamber.com

2012 IBRG Candidate Endorsements

(as of July 31, 2012)

Indiana House Incumbents:

- Rep. Jim Baird, HD 44
- Rep. Bob Behning, HD 91
- Rep. Bruce Borders, HD 45
- Rep. Brian Bosma, HD 88
- Rep. Tim Brown, HD 41
- Rep. Woody Burton, HD 58
- Rep. Bob Cherry, HD 53
- Rep. Ed Clere, HD 72
- Rep. Wes Culver, HD 49
- Rep. Bill Davis, HD 33
- Rep. Sean Eberhart, HD 57
- Rep. Bill Friend, HD 23
- Rep. Dave Frizzell, HD 93
- Rep. Randy Frye, HD 67
- Rep. Doug Gutwein, HD 16
- Rep. Bob Heaton, HD 46
- Rep. Kathy Heuer, HD 83
- Rep. Mike Karickhoff, HD 30
- Rep. Cindy Kirchofer, HD 89
- Rep. Eric Koch, HD 65
- Rep. Rebecca Kubacki, HD 22
- Rep. Don Lehe, HD 25
- Rep. Matt Lehman, HD 79
- Rep. Dan Leonard, HD 50
- Rep. Jack Lutz, HD 35
- Rep. Kevin Mahan, HD 31
- Rep. Jud McMillin, HD 68
- Rep. Wendy McNamara, HD 76
- Rep. Mark Messmer, HD 63
- Rep. Bob Morris, HD 84

- Rep. Tim Neese, HD 48
- Rep. Cindy Noe, HD 87
- Rep. Phyllis Pond, HD 85
- Rep. Rhonda Rhoads, HD 70
- Rep. Kathy Richardson, HD 29
- Rep. Milo Smith, HD 59
- Rep. Mike Speedy, HD 90
- Rep. Steve Stemler, HD 71
- Rep. Greg Steuerwald, HD 40
- Rep. Jeff Thompson, HD 28
- Rep. Jerry Torr, HD 39
- Rep. Eric Turner, HD 32
- Rep. Matt Ubelhor, HD 62
- Rep. Heath VanNatter, HD 38
- Rep. Tim Wesco, HD 21
- Rep. Dave Wolkins, HD 18

Indiana House Non-Incumbents:

- Steve Braun, HD 24
- Dale DeVon, HD 5
- Dick Hamm, HD 56
- Tim Harman, HD 17
- Todd Huston, HD 37
- Jim Lucas, HD 69
- Alan Morrison, HD 42
- Sharon Negele, HD 13
- John Price, HD 47
- Ben Smaltz, HD 52
- Tom Washburne, HD 64
- Dennis Zent, HD 51
- Cindy Ziemke, HD 55

Indiana Senate Incumbents:

- Sen. Jim Arnold, SD 8
- Sen. John Broden, SD 10
- Sen. Ed Charbonneau, SD 5
- Sen. Sue Glick, SD 13
- Sen. Randy Head, SD 18
- Sen. Brandt Hershman, SD 7
- Sen. Jean Leising, SD 42
- Sen. David Long, SD 16
- Sen. Luke Kenley, SD 20
- Sen. Pat Miller, SD 32
- Sen. Ryan Mishler, SD 9
- Sen. Earline Rogers, SD 3
- Sen. Scott Schneider, SD 30
- Sen. Brent Steele, SD 44
- Sen. Carlin Yoder, SD 12
- Sen. Mike Young, SD 35

Indiana Senate Non-Incumbents:

- Rod Bray, SD 37
- Mike Crider, SD 28

U.S. House and Senate:

- Susan Brooks, District 5
- Rep. Larry Buschon, District 8
- Luke Messer, District 6
- Rep. Todd Rokita, District 4
- Rep. Marlin Stutzman, District 3
- Jackie Walorski, District 2
- Rep. Todd Young, District 9