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Investment strategist: Buyers, businesses under shadow of tariff uncertainty

By JORDAN FOOTS

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ELKHART — The economic outlook for RV makers relies on consumer confidence rising above the clouds that surround tariffs, according to Fifth Third Bank's head investment advisor.

Tom Jalics, chief investment strategist at Fifth Third Private Bank, spoke Tuesday at the Economic Update Luncheon hosted by the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce. He noted that there was high demand for RVs as the country came out of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 and 2022, but it wasn't sustainable.

"Huge increase in revenue and earnings for those types of companies. That was not a sustainable trend. If you try to extrapolate a long-term trend off of a sugar high, you're going to be disappointed," he said. "It sounds like 2023 and 2024 were more normal years — perhaps you start extrapolating growth off of 2023 and 2024."

As an industry that relies on consumer discretionary spending, the RV market will always follow job markets, Jalics said.



Elkhart Truth photo / Jordan Fouts

Speaking during a panel discussion at the economic update luncheon are, from left, Brandon Eakins, director of the Elkhart Area Career Center; CareerWise Director Sarah Koontz; Patrick Englert, chancellor of the South Bend-Elkhart Ivy Tech campus; and Tom Jalics, chief investment strategist at Fifth Third Private Bank.

"The unemployment rate, at 4.2 percent nationally, and I look for Elkhart and Goshen, it's under 4 percent,

it's 3.9 percent," he said. "I think what that means is, if people have jobs, they feel secure in those jobs, they're

earning money, they're earning wages, they will spend

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Braun flew to, from Jasper home 11 times over six months

By WHITNEY DOWNARD

Indiana Capital Chronicle

INDIANAPOLIS — Sunday, May 26 was a pretty special day for Indiana Gov. Mike Braun.

The state's top executive spent his time at "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing," punctuated by an appearance on Fox and Friends to recap his first legislative session as governor.

But rather than returning to the Governor's Residence in Indianapolis, just a 20-minute drive from the track, Braun apparently drove to his Jasper family home two-and-a-half hours away.

And the next day, he took a helicopter ride to get back to the state capital.

The trip was one of 11 flights between March 13 and August 1 chronicled in response to a public records request submitted by the Indiana Capital Chronicle, totaling \$23,880. The state said that it would have "incurred" those costs whether or not Braun had used the Indiana State Police helicopter, because those flight hours were necessary "to satisfy (the Federal Aviation Administration's) mandated

hours requirements."

Though the FAA has established standards for pilots to maintain their licenses, the Indiana State Police has its own requirements for pilots to regularly travel on top of that.

"The Indiana State Police expects 1-3 hours of flight time per week per helicopter pilot," said Griffin Reid, a spokesperson for Braun's office. "Transportation decisions are made based on a number of factors."

Eight of those trips ended at Braun's southern Indiana home in Jasper, where the state paid \$1,745.55 to install a 20-foot-by-20-foot gravel pad earlier this year. The remaining three flights transported the governor from Jasper to Indianapolis.

A member of his security detail accompanied him on every trip while his wife, Maureen, joined on only one trip.

Though Braun never flew on Sundays, he used the transit option at least once on every other day of the week. Each flight hour cost approximately \$1,200. A helicopter flight between Jasper and Indianapolis

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How many boards and commissions is too many? Task force seeks answer

By WHITNEY DOWNARD

Indiana Capital Chronicle

INDIANAPOLIS — An interim legislative task force wrestled with the state's hundreds of boards and commissions Tuesday, struggling to learn more about their finances and meeting schedules.

Such groups can include powerful boards who can grant professional licenses, review an inmate's parole application and approve utility price increases while others were designed to be one-off planning committees or exist in name only.

"I don't think it's a controversial statement to say we have too many," said Adam Battalio, a senior policy advisor for Gov. Mike Braun. Battalio, whose Tuesday presentation was limited to just boards and commissions, counted at least 224 such bodies with a gubernatorial appointment.

For years, leaders have sought to tamp down on the state's various councils and task forces, most recently in a house bill that ultimately didn't advance in the 2025 legislative session. Last year, a similar committee scrutinized various groups, which itself came from 2023 legislation.

But determining which groups merit keeping — and which to phase out or combine with others — has been more difficult.

Such bodies have roughly doubled in the last 25 years, Battalio said, across Republican and Democrat administrations and legislatures.

"It's not bad intentions that are behind this growth. In

fact, it's probably important for us to recognize good intentions, over time, grow government," Battalio said. "Those same good intentions can help address this problem (and) reshape government to be more responsive, more efficient."

But some lawmakers were perturbed to learn that the state's Legislative Services Agency has trouble tracking spending and other activities for some boards and commissions.

"One of the first things that came out is they almost no visibility on some of these boards and commissions. Can't track them; can't see them," said Sen. Chris Garten, R-Charlestown. "Which is a problem."

A "low-ball" estimate pinned those cumulative costs at \$700,000, but that doesn't include per diem or travel costs for legislators, coffee or lunch for members or program funding, Battalio said.

"You will notice on those (legislative services agency) fiscal numbers ... There are no aggregated totals. Part of that is because they're concerned they can't see everything, so they're worried about the accuracies or inaccuracies," Garten added.

A better-informed total would be forthcoming, he said.

Measuring boards and commissions

Measuring meeting frequency and outcomes proved more difficult, as 56 boards didn't have any online

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Elkhart Truth file photo

The 49th Apple Festival returns to Nappanee Sept. 18-21.

Nappanee Apple Festival returns Sept. 18-21

TRUTH STAFF

NAPPANEE — The 49th annual Nappanee Apple Festival kicks off Sept. 18-21, continuing a tradition that began in 1975 as a humble one-block celebration.

Today, the community of 7,000 residents welcomes over 100,000 visitors to the weekend event.

The Nappanee Apple Festival has earned top honors in Indiana, being named the #1 fall festival in the state in 2013 and 2016 for its 7-foot apple pie, a legendary signature food item that draws visitors from across the United States. This gigantic pie is sliced into over 800 pieces, satisfying the annual cravings of festival-goers who flock to Nappanee to

indulge in a taste of this beloved tradition, according to organizers.

The festival offers a diverse range of activities and entertainment, featuring three stages of performances, over 150 exhibitors, carnival rides and a Saturday morning parade on Sept. 20 at 10:30 a.m., highlighted by a military aircraft fly-over.

Other events include the Miss Apple Blossom scholarship pageant, Power From the Past Antique Tractor and Engine Show, cornhole tournament, pickleball tournament, Donut Dash 5K Run/Walk, "Napple" baking contest, garden tractor pull, pedal pull contests for kids and adults, the Wings and Wheels show at

the Nappanee airport and mouth-watering apple peeling and pie-eating contests.

New this year, handicap scooters and wheelchairs will be available for rent through Goshen Health. Baby changing and nursing mother's station are also available downtown.

The Luneau Basketball Family, the headlining act, will perform in the Nappanee Library Parking lot from Friday at 5:30 p.m. to Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

The two additional stages will feature a diverse lineup of musical acts, covering a range of genres including rock and roll, classic rock, folk, bluegrass, country, gospel, and variety shows, ensuring something for every musical taste. Fam-

ily-friendly entertainment also takes center stage, with performances by comedy juggler and ventriloquist Mike Hemmelgarn, Silly Safaris' interactive animal shows, and the Granpa Cratchet Kids Show and Puppets.

Indulge in a delicious array of apple treats during the festival or take some home to savor later, including classic favorites like apple pie, crispy fritters, tender dumplings, flaky turnovers, sweet fry pies, freshly baked bread, tangy applesauce, refreshing cider, and creamy butter, organizers say.

Organizers say the Nappanee Apple Festival is a hometown celebration that

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