

## Caucus finds candidates for most seats

### Democrats hoping to flip control of House

By Alexandra Kukulka  
POST-TRIBUNE

The vast majority of Indiana House seats have Democratic candidates, which local Democratic Party leaders celebrated and local Republican Party leaders said wouldn't change the state's political makeup. Indiana Democrats have 97 candidates slated out of the state's 100 House districts, following the party filling several ballot vacancies, which is the highest number of seats contested by Democrats this century, according to a news release from the Indiana House

Democratic Caucus. The Indiana House Democrats are working toward flipping four seats to break the Republican supermajority. In November, more than 6.5 million Hoosiers will have the option to vote for a Democrat in their House district, according to the release. "Our recruitment of 97 talented Democratic candidates across Indiana is a clear sign of Democrats' momentum heading into the general election. The cost of everything is sky high. Hoosiers are ready for a break from the failed policies of the Republican supermajority," said Indiana House Democratic Leader Phil GiaQuinta, D-Fort Wayne, in the statement. The Indiana House Democratic

Caucus' recruitment of candidates follows the recent Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee announcement of 11 target races — including House District 9 currently held by Rep. Randy Novak and House District 10 held by Rep. Chuck Moseley. The Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee is investing in Indiana for the first time in over a decade, according to the release. "Indiana Democrats are excited to provide voters with a choice at the ballot box, and we stand ready to fight back against extreme policies that don't serve our communities," GiaQuinta said. Indiana University Associate Professor of Political Science Aaron Dusso said in the 2024 election,

25 House Republicans ran unopposed, so the Democratic party has substantially closed the gap on unopposed races. Looking at the 2026 election, Dusso said Democrats have an advantage because it's an off-year election, the Republican Party holds the presidency, President Donald Trump has low approval ratings and the economy is "mixed at best." "This should be an advantage Democrat election across the entire country and Indiana in general," Dusso said. "If you're going to run as a Democrat, this is your year. You should run. If the Democratic Party in Indiana is going to be able to fill the slate, this once-in-a-century slate, this would be the year." The first step is filling the ballot,

and the Democratic Party has accomplished that, Dusso said. The next question is the quality of the candidates, which will come to light amid campaigning, and the party's ability to break through the Republican supermajority, he said. "This is probably the best chance (Democrats) have had in a while, but I would probably still bet against them," Dusso said. What's more likely to happen is that the House shifts from feeling like an 80% Republican and 20% Democrat split to a 60% Republican and 40% Democratic split, Dusso said, which would still give the Democratic voice in the House more power.

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Governor Mike Braun speaks with Mitch Frazier, president of IBJ Media, during the Fireside Chat portion of the Innovate Northwest Indiana program held at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana, Wednesday. This year was the fourth for the program that also featured a panel discussion of local politicians and business leaders. ANDY LAVALLEY/PHOTOS FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

## South Shore Line's limits to last two more weeks

By Doug Ross  
FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

Repairs are underway to the South Shore Line's infrastructure damaged by a June 24 freight train derailment near the East Chicago station.

Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District President and CEO David Dech sent a letter to riders Tuesday to update them on the South Shore Line's response to the derailment.

South Shore Freight, a tenant railroad using the South Shore Line's tracks, was westbound with a 120-car empty freight train when 13 cars derailed on the Grand Calumet River Bridge, causing significant damage to several structures that support the overhead lines that power the electric passenger trains.

"Because of the bridge's location and the specialized nature of these structures, repairs are especially complex," Dech wrote. "Each replacement component must be custom fabricated to fit this specific area."

Materials began arriving on site Monday.

"Crews have completed removal of the remaining damaged structures and are preparing the bridge for installation of the new components. Fabrication of the replacement structures is taking place both onsite and offsite," Dech wrote.

"At this time, we do not have a confirmed date for the restoration of full service. Based on the current repair timeline, we anticipate operating under the weekend/holiday schedule and bus bridge for approximately two more weeks," Dech wrote. "Please plan ahead, allow extra travel time, and expect the possibility of significant delays."

For now, the railroad is using buses between the East Chicago and Hammond Gateway stations.

It's also using a modified version of the weekend/holiday schedule, with the addition of early trains for the morning and afternoon rush between Munster/Dyer and Millen-

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## Braun: Hammond stadium for Bears is in the red zone

### As deal nears completion, leaders discuss future for city

By Doug Ross  
FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

Indiana Gov. Mike Braun discussed his Chicago Bears play-book Wednesday, saying the bid for a Hammond stadium is in the red zone.

"Until you ink it, it's not done, but it's moved a long distance in a short time because it had moved hardly at all in 5.5 years," he said at the Innovate Northwest Indiana event at Valparaiso University.

"The Bears is a function of due diligence to get where we need to be to close it," he said.

Like his predecessors, Braun didn't hesitate to compare and contrast Indiana and Illinois.

"The Bears is a classic story, kind of a tale of two different states," he said.

From the time Braun first spoke with Bears CEO Kevin Warren to the enabling legislation for the Hammond stadium, Indiana moved at the speed of business, not government, he said.

The Bears announcement that Hammond is the preferred site for the new stadium came after the Illinois Legislature ended its session May 31 without putting together a deal better than the one Indiana offered, Braun said.

"They started that journey six years ago, got 5.5 years into it, and there was no response" from Illinois, he said.

Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. said the Bears' interest in Hammond is just another instance of an Illinois

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Kellie Taillon joins the crowd in applause during the Fireside Chat portion of the Innovate Northwest Indiana program featuring Indiana Governor Mike Braun held at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana, Wednesday. Taillon is president and CEO of the Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce.

## Gary tweaking recycling program to reduce waste

By Carole Carlson  
FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

Gary is revamping its year-old curbside recycling program, cutting back to a biweekly pickup schedule and placing an emphasis on reducing contamination of items placed in the bins.

"Recycling only works if it's clean," Public Works Executive Director Rachelle Ceaser told the city council on Tuesday. "We're challenged by the integrity of the recycling. At least 80% of the loads we pick up have to be clean."

The new schedule began July 1. Residents received a mailing of the new collection dates, she said.

The changes came after a review of operations and meetings with local leaders, neighboring communities and community groups.

Ceaser said the approved recyclable items include paper, cardboard, plastic, metals and glass. If a bin contains unapproved items, a rejection ticket will be issued explaining the contamination. After three uncollectible occurrences, the recycling bin will be removed.

"I can't overstate how important compliance is. We're asking folks to register for the program, so we can get some good data on the number of households who are participating," she said.

All existing recycling customers must pledge to continue participating under the new guidelines. Residents are asked to notify the Recycling Department at 219-882-8445 by July 31. Residents can also sign the pledge online at gary.gov/recycling on the city's website.

"Recycling just one of the initiatives to build out waste diversion and keep stuff out of the landfill. We're proud of our plastic reduction," she said.

Chief Operating Officer Michael Suggs said a new directive requiring residents to place their trash bins in front of the house, instead of in the alley, was triggered by complaints from utility companies. About 35%

of residents use their alleys for trash pickup.

He said the city's alleys have been neglected and overgrown with weeds making them impassable. He said the Northern Indiana Public Service Co. and the Indiana American Water Co. complained they couldn't access some of the alleys to do maintenance.

The city asked residents to place their trash bins in front of their homes so the city can clean the alleys.

Suggs said residents who have difficulty moving their bins to the front of their homes should call 311 or 219-881-1311.

Also, the council unanimously

approved a conditional use variance allowing Silvestray Social, a LaPorte-based nonprofit, to open a veterinary clinic at 563 Lake St.

The clinic is restricted from offering kennel services.

The council approved a variance allowing the Love Travel Stop, 3150 Richard G. Hatcher Boulevard, to install a compressed natural gas pump.

A representative said the gas is acquired from NIPSCO and compressed and stored. He said the fuel source is popular with fleet vehicles and over-the-road trucks.

Carole Carlson is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.