

OPINION & COMMENTARY

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EDITORIALS

Mean streets

INDIANAPOLIS TOPS NEW YORK, DETROIT IN SOME CATEGORIES OF CRIME

Our position:

Indianapolis is paying a high price for not investing in public safety.

How bad has crime become in Indianapolis? Consider this: New York City, despite its size and decades-long perception of lawlessness, is far safer than the Circle City.

Between 2000 and 2005, crime rates per 100,000 residents and actual incidents in New York have fallen in every category. At the same time, crime rates in Indianapolis have steadily risen, and in some cases doubled.

A Star Editorial Board analysis of crime data for Indianapolis (within the Indianapolis Police Department's jurisdiction), New York and seven midsized cities culled from the FBI reveals some sobering facts about safety in the city:

◆ Of the nine, Indianapolis is the only city that has seen crime rates and incidents rise in every category. Even Detroit, despite its reputation for mayhem, has recorded lower crime rates in some categories.

◆ Rates and incidents of larceny in Indianapolis doubled between 2000 and 2005, leading all cities surveyed.

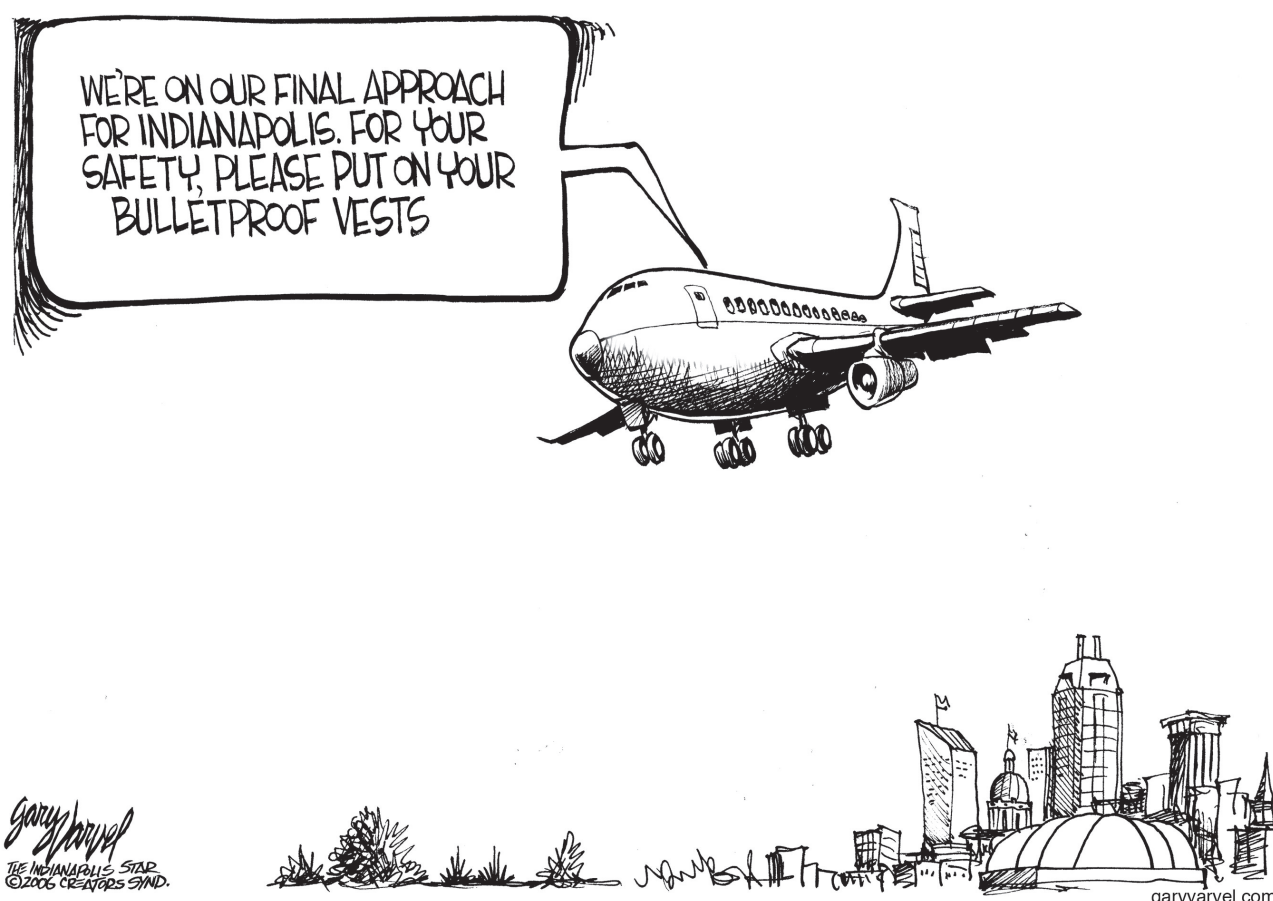
◆ The city's rate of burglaries is approaching Detroit's. Burglary rates and incidents have risen faster here than in any other city surveyed.

The population in both New York and Indianapolis is growing slowly. Like most cities on the list, they are plagued by high dropout rates, persistent poverty and the flight of the middle class to suburbia.

The difference lies in the focus on public safety and quality-of-life issues.

Under four mayors since the mid-1970s, New York has made investing in public safety — and improving quality of life — a top priority through such innovations as community policing. Officials in Indianapolis, in contrast, have continually underfunded public safety.

Now the penny-pinching of public safety in Indianapolis is borne out in crime statistics and blood-stained streets.



Burglaries

Rate of burglaries per 100,000 people in 2005 and change since 2000:
Indianapolis: 1,472.8, up 44 percent
Cleveland: 2,069.1, up 33 percent
San Francisco: 815.2, up 11 percent

Austin: 1,055.4, up 8 percent
Columbus: 1,998.7, up 5 percent
Detroit: 1,698.4, up 2 percent
Jacksonville: 1,149.7, down 15 percent

Milwaukee: 814.1, down 24 percent

New York: 285, down 39 percent

Total burglaries in 2005 and change since 2000:

Indianapolis: 11,548, up 43 percent
Cleveland: 8,577, up 15 percent
Austin: 7,285, up 13 percent
Columbus: 14,604, up 7 percent
San Francisco: 6,028, up 6 percent

Detroit: 15,059, down 5 percent
Jacksonville: 8,998, down 10 percent

Milwaukee: 4,713, down 26 percent

New York: 32,210, down 38 percent

Aggravated assaults

Rate of aggravated assaults per 100,000 people in 2005 and change since 2000:

Milwaukee: 494.3, up 30 percent
Detroit: 1,496.9, up 9 percent
Indianapolis: 515.1, up 9 percent

Austin: 271.3, up 6 percent
San Francisco: 356.9, unchanged
Cleveland: 502.3, down 8 percent
Columbus: 234.6, down 26 percent

New York: 343.2, down 33 percent

Jacksonville: 492.8, down 36 percent

Total aggravated assaults in 2005 and change since 2000:

Milwaukee: 2,862, up 26 percent
Austin: 1,873, up 11 percent
Indianapolis: 4,039, up 7.6 percent

Detroit: 13,273, up 2 percent
San Francisco: 2,639, down 4 percent

Cleveland: 2,082, down 8 percent
Columbus: 1,714, down 24 percent

New York: 27,950, down 32 percent

Jacksonville: 3,997, down 42 percent

Robberies

Rate of robberies per 100,000 people in 2005 and change since 2000:

Cleveland: 902.9, up 41 percent
Indianapolis: 417.5, up 30 percent
Columbus: 516.9, up 19 percent

Austin: 171.2, up 12 percent
Jacksonville: 284.9, up 4 percent
Milwaukee: 515.3, up 2 percent
San Francisco: 416.3, down 6 percent

Detroit: 758.5, down 9 percent

New York: 303.6, down 25 percent

Total robberies in 2005 and change since 2000:

Indianapolis: 3,274, up 38 percent
Columbus: 3,777, up 22 percent
Cleveland: 3,743, up 21 percent

Jacksonville: 2,253, up 11 percent
Austin: 1,182, up 8 percent
Milwaukee: 2,983, down 1 percent

San Francisco: 3,078, down 11 percent

Detroit: 6,725, down 15 percent

New York: 24,722, down 24 percent

Larceny

Rate of larceny per 100,000 people in 2005 and change since 2000:

Indianapolis: 3,767.4, up 82 percent
Cleveland: 3,151.2, up 16 percent
Austin: 4,627, up 14 percent
Jacksonville: 3,779.9, down 2 percent
Milwaukee: 3,846.9, down 4 percent
New York: 1,489.9, down 14 percent
Columbus: 4,341.8, down 15 percent
San Francisco: 2,689.5, down 21 percent

Detroit: 1,931.3, down 42 percent

Total larcenies in 2005 and change since 2000:

Indianapolis: 29,541, up 79 percent
Austin: 31,938, up 19 percent
Jacksonville: 29,583, up 4 percent
Cleveland: 13,063, up 1 percent

Milwaukee: 22,269, down 7 percent
Columbus: 31,938, down 13 percent
New York: 120,918, down 13 percent
San Francisco: 19,887, down 19 percent

Detroit: 17,124, down 46 percent

Murders

Rate of murders per 100,000 people in 2005 and increase/decrease since 2000:

Cleveland: 26.3 per 100,000, up 78 percent

San Francisco: 13 per 100,000, up 71 percent

Columbus: 14 per 100,000, up 39 percent

Jacksonville: 11.6 per 100,000, up 8.4 percent

Indianapolis: 13.5 per 100,000, up 4.6 percent

Milwaukee: 21.07 per 100,000, up 3.3 percent

New York: 7.4 per 100,000, down 13 percent

Austin: 3.8 per 100,000, down 19 percent

Detroit: 40.5 per 100,000, down 26 percent

Total murders in 2005 and increase/decrease since 2000:

San Francisco: 96, up 63 percent
Cleveland: 109, up 54 percent
Columbus: 102, up 52 percent
Jacksonville: 91, up 15 percent
Indianapolis (IPD only): 108, up 13 percent

Detroit: 359, down 10 percent
New York: 539, down 19 percent
Austin: 26, down 22 percent

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation

Democrats take low road on immigration

On the sensitive issue of illegal immigration, Democrats are acting more like demagogues. At various times in this debate, they've been cynical, hypocritical and dishonest.

First, 191 House Democrats voted against an amendment to the immigration bill that would have reduced the infraction of being in the country illegally from a felony to a misdemeanor. Next, Democrats held up the Senate's version of immigration reform last spring and then tried to pin the blame on the GOP. Now, a 35-second Internet video ad produced by the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and placed on the organization's Web site has spurred an outcry from Hispanic groups.

The ad, since yanked, was part of a national campaign by Democrats to engage in a little political jujitsu. The strategy is to use the Republicans' strength on national security against them by pointing out that, after nearly six years of the Bush administration, America's foreign policy is a jumbled mess and the world is still a dangerous place.

I won't argue those points. There are plenty of people on both sides of the aisle who are critical of the Bush foreign policy.

But what I do take issue with is that the DSCC video carelessly presented images of illegal immigrants scaling a border wall juxtaposed with scenes of armed terrorists, Osama bin Laden, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il and packaged them all as threats to na-



RUBEN NAVARRETTE

tional security.

Puleeze. Yes, illegal immigrants have broken our laws and I have no trouble referring to them as criminals for doing so. But that doesn't mean they should be lumped together with murdering terrorists and repressive dictators. That only muddies the issue. It also makes you wonder if Sen. Charles Schumer of New York, the DSCC chairman, is taking cues from CNN's Lou Dobbs.

The Democrats' ad opened with the words "Security Under Bush and GOP?" It features scenes of a masked man with a bazooka, rubble from terrorist attacks and police searching a train. Then came footage of two people climbing a border fence as the words "millions more illegal immigrants" flashed on the screen. The ad ended with a query ("Feel safer?") and a plea ("Vote for change.").

Change? Yeah, right. This is no change from the sort of stunts that Republicans pull whenever they try to capitalize on the cultural anxiety that many Americans are experiencing because of illegal immigration, such as those awful GOP-sponsored field hearings meant to fire up conservatives for

the November election.

Last year, speaking to the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean said that Republicans "scapegoat" illegal immigrants and that the GOP would use immigration as a wedge issue in the 2006 elections. He also pledged that "Democrats will never divide Americans to win elections."

Never came a lot sooner than I expected. Now, in their own attempt to win seats in Congress, Democrats are doing what they accuse Republicans of doing — exploiting the immigration issue.

I suppose I should be grateful that Democrats finally had something to say about illegal immigration after months of ducking for cover and letting Republicans take all the heat. This issue is a tough one for Democrats. They're being squeezed by two loyal constituencies: Latinos who want comprehensive reform that includes guest workers, and labor unions that support the first but oppose the second. No matter what they decide to support, Democrats are bound to upset one group or the other. So they have been sitting in the stands and watching Republicans slug it out over conflicting ideas.

At least the GOP has ideas. The Democratic strategy seems to be to let members of the other party destroy one another and then try to demonize any Republicans who are left standing as anti-immigrant and anti-Hispanic.

That's funny. That's how the Democrats' ad came across to Hispanic



COKE WHITWORTH / Associated Press

groups, ranging from the conservative Republican National Hispanic Assembly to the more liberal NCLR. Both groups called the ad "appalling." Once the criticism mounted, the ad was pulled. But the damage was done.

Still, I actually think these sorts of eruptions are helpful. They serve as a wake-up call for Hispanics, a reminder that — in this two-party system — either party will sell Hispanics out in a

minute if it means getting elected officials re-elected.

Now, I have a question for my fellow Hispanics. After months of Republicans running the show on immigration policy, Democrats are now trying to steer this debate to serve their ends.

Feel safer?

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NEVER? Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean spoke last year to the National Council of La Raza, pledging that "Democrats will never divide Americans to win elections."