

BLOOMINGTON ROTARY CLUB MEETING

August 23, 2022 | Frangipani Room and on Zoom

Next Week's Program



Khurram Sheikh, PhD student and associate instructor at the IU Media School, will speak about "Reimagining Muslim Identity through Arts." Khurram studies emerging practices of third-world artists and filmmakers and how the role of sponsorship, production, circulation, and exhibition create local and global film cultures. Khurram's professional experiences include working as a documentary filmmaker/director in film labs and workshops organized by film festivals and as a theater producer and director in Pakistan. Currently Khurram is a Program Assistant at the Muslim Voices project, where he develops social media content for the representation of Muslims in and beyond the U.S.

This Week's News

Patrick Smith, NAACP member of our club, has completed his PhD in Higher Education.

In memory of their daughter, Doris and **Jim Sims** presented the first Camisha Sims scholarship for someone studying to be a nurse.

Brown County Rotary invites Bloomington Rotary members to "A Taste of Art," Friday, September 16, at Seasons Lodge Conference Center, 560 State Road 46 in Nashville. The event begins at 5 p.m. with adult beverages from local establishments, heavy hors d'oeuvres, and time for viewing the fine art in the live and silent auctions. The live art auction begins at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$45 in advance and \$50 at the door.

Joy Harter, chair of the Youth Services Committee, thanked members **Katie Beck**, **Raj Haddawi**, **Tina Swanson**, and **Jimmy Torrey** and gave an update of activities:

- Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) returns October 21-23 at Bradford Woods. RYLA is a weekend leadership camp experience for high school students, sponsored by our club and others in our district. **Loren Snyder** is District Chair. Joy encouraged members to help get the word out to prospective participants. Our club pays the costs.
- The committee is working hard to reinvigorate Interact Clubs at Bloomington North and South High Schools.

- Rotarians are encouraged to drop in at the IU Student Involvement Fair on Thursday, August 25, 4-7 p.m., and introduce themselves to Rotaract Club members.

This Week's Program. Available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/CarZx8aRHPE>



Lynn Schwartzberg introduced Brandon Smith, familiar to many from his reporting as Statehouse Bureau Chief for Indiana Public Media and as host of *Indiana Week in Review*, a weekly political talk show heard across the state.

Brandon thanked **Aaron Brewington** for his reflection on the need for quality journalism. He said he too was “deeply concerned about the state of journalism” and gave a plug for WTIU/WFIU, supported by “listeners like you,” not by corporate interests.

Brandon described the recently concluded Special Session of the Indiana General Assembly, which enacted a nearly total ban on abortions and approved a tax refund.

The groundwork for the session was laid months ago, when Gov. Holcomb, the only person authorized to call a Special Session, wished to return some of Indiana’s \$6 billion surplus to taxpayers.

During the Special Session the Legislature became the first in the nation to pass new laws restricting access to abortion, which put a national spotlight on Indiana. The bill banned all abortions except:

- where the life of the pregnant person is “at risk,” a term not further defined in the law, putting pressure on doctors who could lose their licenses for unlawful abortions,
- in cases of rape or incest, within 10 weeks of fertilization, and
- for fatal fetal anomalies, within 20 weeks of fertilization.

Brandon said this bill could force thousands to give birth in a state with one of the worst infant mortality rates in the country. Experts predict a 17% increase in maternal deaths, rising to as high as 33% in the Black community. “People will die,” he said. The law takes effect September 15; so far, no legal challenges have been filed.

The second act passed during the Special Session was one responding to the state’s \$6+ billion in budget reserves as of June 30. The target amount for reserves is \$2.5 billion.

The bill will return \$200 to every taxpayer who filed a tax return in 2022. Because many people receiving Social Security (for retirement or disability) did not file returns, they will not be included in the refunds, unless they file in 2023 and get a credit.

Because of the abortion ban, 7,000-8,000 additional births are expected. The Legislature approved an additional \$70-\$80 million in funding for support services, a provision that passed with bipartisan support. Brandon noted, "This is hilariously not even close to enough, in a state that is ill-prepared to treat/care for pregnant people now and has one of the worst public health systems in the country."

Phil Eskew said he was one of 30 physicians who testified before the eight-member House Courts and Criminal Code Committee. He felt the hearings were "a sham." "Legislators didn't listen to the 100 people who testified," he reported.

Brandon responded that many have questioned whether the Legislature was responsive. Polls from both sides of the aisle indicate that a vast percentage of people want abortion to be legal in some circumstances. Many Hoosiers prefer that the laws remain the same, with abortion legal before 22 weeks, with some provisions for medical emergencies after that. The same disconnect with voters occurred with the Legislature's decision to remove gun licensing. A strong majority of Hoosiers prefer retaining licensing. Brandon credited money and ideology for overriding voter sentiments in both instances.

Asked what it would take to hold a referendum on abortion as Kansas did, Brandon replied that Indiana has no mechanism for citizen-led ballot initiatives. Democratic lawmakers proposed a non-binding poll in the November election, but Republicans voted the proposal down, for three reasons Brandon felt were legitimate concerns: 1) lack of precedent for holding referenda, 2) logistics and printing requirements, with ballots already in press for the fall election cycle, and 3) concerns about how to word the question.

In answer to another question, Brandon said there is 0% chance for a change in legislative leadership. Republicans are likely to retain their supermajorities in both chambers. If the abortion legislation motivates voters, House Democrats could break the supermajority, giving them a bit more leverage during negotiations because they could stop action by walking out. It would be largely a symbolic win, after eight years of Republican supermajorities. Brandon concluded, "The abortion debate is not over. Some Republican legislators want even more extreme restrictions, with no exceptions."

The abortion legislation does not require a police report or conviction to support the exception in cases of rape, he said. The doctor must make a decision about whether the claim of rape is credible.

Legislators wish to continue to pay down pension debt, but there is little interest in changing the state tax. Federal pandemic relief funds and inflation mean an increase in taxes collected. Legislators prefer to give refunds. If they cut the rates and there is a downturn in the economy, there is no way to raise the funds needed to maintain government. In the next budget, legislators have announced intentions to increase funding for public health, salaries for state employees, and K-12 education.

Our Weekly Gathering, August 16

Art Oehmich was the greeter. President **Alain Barker** reminded members and guests that Rotary is a global network of 1.4 million neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change. Members believe that we have a shared responsibility to take action on the world's most persistent issues. Rotary's 46,000+ clubs work together to promote peace; fight disease; provide clean water, sanitation, and hygiene; save mothers and children; support education; grow local economies; and protect the environment.

Liz Irwin introduced guests in the room:

- Mary Goetze, guest of **Martha Wailes**
- Traci Jovanovich, daughter and guest of **Winston Shindell**
- Brad Kimmel, Executive Director of Indiana Public Media, guest of **Jim Bright**
- John Miller, IUB Rotaract President, guest of the club
- Amy O'Shaughnessy, WTIU/WFIU Director of Development, guest of **Jim Bright**
- Sandiya Sajan, IUB Rotaract VP, guest of the club
- James Wolf, guest of **Alain Barker**

Joy Harter introduced guests on Zoom:

- Don Byrd, Braver Angels
- L.A. Williams

Members contributed Happy Dollars to celebrate wedding anniversaries (**Glenda Murray**, 30; **Jim Kryway** 55; and **Dick McKaig** 57). Others celebrated visiting relatives and children healing, starting new jobs, leaving for college, and returning from afar.

Birthdays this week:

Chris Kroll, August 23

Bill Oates, August 24

Membership anniversary this week:

Len Tieman, 1 year with our club and 4 with Bloomington Sunrise Rotary

Sara Laughlin, Reporter