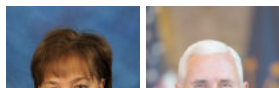


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Pence grows communications team following stumbles



Shelley Triol is the new communications director for Republican Gov. Mike Pence.

1 hour ago • [Dan Carden](#) dan.carden@nwi.com, (317) 637-9078

INDIANAPOLIS | Gov. Mike Pence has added a fifth person to his taxpayer-funded messaging team in the wake of public relations disasters associated with Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act and Just IN, his aborted state-run news service.

Shelley Triol, a former Indianapolis television reporter who has been a \$95,000-a-year spokeswoman for the Indiana Department of Administration, began work Tuesday as Pence's communications director.

Her duties include coordinating the Republican governor's message with state agencies and directing the overall

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efforts of his press office.

"Shelley brings a deep history of work in media and public relations that will be a great benefit to advancing the governor's agenda," said Matt Lloyd, who started work May 19 as Pence's deputy chief of staff for communications and strategy.

Lloyd, whose salary is not yet listed on the state's transparency website, previously was Pence's spokesman in the U.S. House for 10 years before taking a job as director of communications for Koch Industries, an industrial conglomerate led by two billionaire brothers who plan to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to influence the 2016 presidential election.

Together they replace Christy Denault, the \$112,200-a-year Pence communications director, who resigned May 22 to spend more time with her four young children.

Other Pence communications staff include Press Secretary Kara Brooks, who earns \$91,800 a year; Bridget Cleveland, the deputy press secretary paid \$56,100 a year; and Stephanie Hodgkin, a \$45,900-a-year communications specialist.

Combined, Pence's messaging team takes home more than \$400,000 a year in salaries. Though that total appears smaller in state records because Cleveland is paid by the Office of Technology and Hodgkin by the Department of Health, despite working at cubicles less than 200 feet from Pence's desk.

Pence's predecessor, Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels, got by with three communications staffers. Republican Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner spends \$508,125 a year on six, just one more than Pence, even though Illinois has twice Indiana's population.

The office shake-up follows Pence's inability to defend the "religious freedom" law he enacted March 26 against claims that it licensed discrimination against homosexuals, which prompted a worldwide "Boycott Indiana" movement.

The Republican-controlled Legislature later approved a second measure prohibiting discrimination under the guise of religious liberty, which Pence reluctantly signed and then left the country for several days without speaking to reporters.

The Pence administration has since announced plans to spend up to \$2 million in state funds with national public relations firms trying to restore Indiana's reputation as a welcoming state.

The religious freedom debacle came on the heels of further national derision connected to the Soviet-like Just IN, Pence's planned state-run news service that his press office intended to compete with traditional media outlets for state government news.

Records indicate Triol was a member of the eight-person Just IN governance committee that would have managed the state news website and exercised overall responsibility for its production.

Pence claimed not to have known about Just IN during its planning stages, despite his office hiring two employees to write for the website.

He terminated Just IN after even his Republican Statehouse allies joked about brushing up on



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their Russian language skills, though the two people hired to write for Just IN remain state employees.

Managing Editor Bill McCleery is an undefined executive making \$60,000 a year with the Indiana Office of Technology. Michelle Wickham, the assistant managing editor, is paid \$40,800 a year as information director for the state's disability rights agency.

Pence earns \$111,381 a year as Indiana's chief executive.

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