

# Helping the Taliban

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Marty Trillhaase



Ralph Peters



Bruce Sweeney



Blake Hall



Joseph Fuiten



Dean Cameron

## Cheers and Jeers

**Jeers** ... to Fox News analyst Lt. Col. Ralph Peters. Pfc. Bowe Bergdahl of Hailey is in the hands of the Taliban, and here's some of what Peters had to say about it: "He is an apparent deserter. Reports are indeed that he abandoned his buddies, abandoned his post, and walked off. We'll see what the ultimate truth of it is, but if he did, if he's a deserter at wartime, well, as one of my old platoon sergeants would say, he's in

'boku deep kimchi.' ... If, when the facts are in, we find out that through some convoluted chain of events, he really was captured by the Taliban, I'm with him. But, if he walked away from his post, and his buddies at wartime ..., I don't care how hard it sounds. As far as I'm concerned, the Taliban can save us a lot of legal hassles and legal bills."

Before Peters or anybody else jumps to an enormous conclusion, can he first allow the Army and the U.S. government to recover this soldier? The rest can sort itself out later.

So far, there are at least three versions of what happened earlier this month: Bergdahl left his base in Afghanistan, he was captured while dragging behind his platoon or he was the drunken American that Taliban sources claimed to have captured.

You can bet the Taliban is applying psychological tactics against Bergdahl. A big-mouthed colonel just handed them one more weapon.

**Cheers** ... to Bruce Sweeney of Lewiston. Currently a member of the state transportation board, a former state legislator, businessman, school board member, volunteer football and track coach, Sweeney is getting some overdue recognition. The Lewiston School Board renamed the track and field at Vollmer Bowl in honor of Sweeney and his late wife Marilyn.

A track and field star in his own right, Sweeney donated \$50,000 to fund landscaping and seating at the high school facility. When the project is completed next month, a formal dedication will be held.

**Cheers** ... to the Moscow City Council. It unanimously put Moscow on the map as a town that prizes the health of people who work in bars by passing a ban on smoking.

That means bartenders and waiters won't have to balance the hazards of secondhand smoke - which contains a higher concentration of toxic and cancer-causing agents than what a cigarette smoker inhales - against being employed.

In its landmark indoor air quality act, the Idaho Legislature excluded bars but gave cities and counties the authority. It takes courage, however, when one of them acts.

**Jeers** ... to former Idaho Republican Party chairman, former Idaho State Board of Education president and former Republican National Committee general counsel Blake Hall of Idaho Falls.

Sift through Idaho Statesman columnist Dan Popkey's profile of Hall Sunday and you're left with this observation: For a career politician whose party bashes government and promotes the private marketplace at every turn, Hall sure takes a lot of taxpayer money:

I At one time, he was earning \$20,000 a month from the federal contractor charged with cleaning up wastes stored at the Idaho National Laboratory.

I He has a full-time job at Bonneville County, which pays him \$59,800 a year and, until 1995, also provided Hall with health care and accident insurance. He's still entitled to a public employee pension, worth \$30,500 a year if he retires at age 65.

I The Catastrophic Health Care Program, which covers the health care costs of people deemed unable to pay them, pays him \$205,000 a year. In the 24 years Hall has had the contract, it has not been put up to competitive bid.

I The Idaho Counties Risk Management Program, which insures 672 local governments, pays him \$341,400 to represent.

That's more than \$846,000 in taxpayer money. That's twice what President Barack Obama makes and nearly five times what the country pays Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho.

How's that for public service?

**Cheers** ... to the Rev. Joseph Fuiten of the Cedar Park Assembly of God Church at Bothell, Wash. An opponent of gay marriage, Fuiten opposes Referendum 71, which would repeal Washington's domestic partnership law.

Fuiten told the Seattle Times:

I Referendum 71 "drags us backward into a negative fight we're not going to win.

I "I don't want the church to be viewed as oppressive (and) as opposed to people living their lives and eking out whatever happiness they can."

I "God is not coercive ... the idea that people ought to be free to live their life and live the way they want to - I don't object to that."

Well said.

**Cheers** ... to Sen. Dean Cameron, R-Rupert. The co-chairman of the Idaho Legislature's budget-writing committee, Cameron last week joined in a joint committee's endorsement of restoring state support for childhood immunizations.

The feds paid for uninsured kids, and that program will continue. But, to save more than \$2 million, Gov. Butch Otter's administration canceled helping kids whose parents have health insurance.

Between co-pays and deductibles, many parents will end up paying the cost themselves - and may put it off. Physicians may have fewer incentives to provide that service.

Since 2004, the percentage of Idaho kids who have been vaccinated dropped from 70 percent to 57.6 percent - worst in the nation.

"What the Department (of Health and Welfare) is facing for their budget in 2010 and 2011 - it isn't pretty," Cameron said. But "I believe there's actual evidence that the lack of immunization actually costs us more." - M.T.