

OUR VIEW: Idaho Democrats have gone to the dark side

By Murf Raquet, for the editorial board

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Say it ain't so!

Idaho Democrats are going the way of their Republican brethren when it comes to government secrecy.

The minority Democrats, with just 18 House seats and seven in the Senate, made the decision to caucus behind closed doors to maximize their effectiveness.

That reason doesn't fly with us.

The party would be more effective if it continued to conduct its business in the open.

Closed meetings between elected officials smack of shady deals and other shenanigans, once the norm when the public was nothing more than a money source.

Open meeting laws have all but eliminated secret gatherings, but that doesn't stop elected officials from attempting to meet behind closed doors.

In Idaho, closed caucuses are allowed as a way for political parties to discuss strategy and priorities. We wonder why Republicans in the Gem State would feel the need to have such meetings when they dominate every aspect of the legislative process by their sheer numbers.

It seems the only resistance the GOP receives on a regular basis is from the state's Republican governor, who never met a Legislature he couldn't bully.

It would behoove the Democrats to keep the status quo of open meetings and transparency. There's not a whole bunch of strategy that's going to deal a huge setback to the GOP agenda.

Unfettered access to our elected officials is essential to the governing process, especially on the state and local levels.

The process stops being public once those doors close.

We cannot say for certain if legislation is illegally discussed in caucuses, because we can't attend the meetings and participants are tight-lipped.

We encourage Idaho Democrats to reconsider their decision. It's the best way for voters to see how their party conducts its business without having to employ X-ray vision.