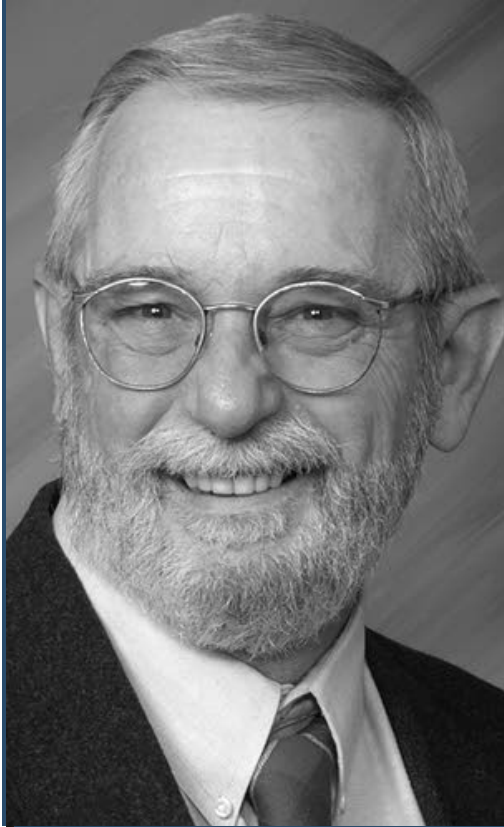


# Bailing out

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- (6) comments

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John Currin...



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**JEERS** ... to former Lewiston City Councilor John C. Currin. Like former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, Currin is stepping aside from office in midterm because he wants to, not because he has to. That's breaking a commitment he made to the voters.

No one begrudges an elected official - especially one who holds a part-time government post - from stepping down when a job transfer, health issues or family challenges demand it.

But Currin has a policy dispute with his fellow councilors. Last fall's election handed critics of city Manager John C. (Jay) Krauss an apparent majority.

Currin, a 10-year-veteran, is one of Krauss' allies. When he quit this week, Currin said he didn't like how the new council was treating Krauss.

Sure, it's not fun being on the losing side of a political debate. Ask any Democratic legislator in Boise or Republican lawmaker in Olympia. But what would happen if political minorities threw up their hands in frustration and pulled a Currin?

Besides, what does Currin expect to happen next? The councilors with whom he disagrees pick his successor. Potentially, that will steer the city in a direction Currin doesn't want. What sense does that make?

**JEERS** ... to U.S. Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, both D-Wash., and Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, both R-Idaho. All four lined up on the wrong side of a plan to begin addressing the nation's dangerously high budget deficits.

They helped the Senate kill a bipartisan commission empowered to chart a path back toward fiscal sanity. Congress would then face the choice of approving or killing whatever package of spending cuts and tax increases the panel agreed upon. Nitpicking it to death would not be an option.

Just in case you're keeping score, the government will spend \$1.3 trillion more next year than it takes in. At this rate, the national debt will triple the yearly national output of goods and services in 30 years.

Either way, you can expect economic collapse, sky-high interest rates and hyperinflation.

So the choice comes down to putting partisan politics aside and trying to avert the coming crisis.

Or continuing business as usual.

**JEERS** ... to Idaho State Board of Education President Paul Agidius of Moscow. If there's one person in this state who should be speaking truth to power, it is the president of the board of education. He should tell lawmakers and the public the consequences of cutting school budgets and slashing higher education resources for the second year in a row.

It is not Agidius' responsibility to provide political cover for those state leaders.

But that's what he did.

Speaking to the Legislature's budget committee Monday, Agidius said: "It isn't my job to come here and beg for funding. I'm here to help you find solutions and make sure state institutions are making the best use of the dollars you appropriate."

Agidius is being a team player. But it leaves the public under the impression that spending less on education doesn't injure schools, colleges and universities - and people who depend on them.

If the president of the State Board of Education won't be an advocate for education, who will?

**CHEERS** ... to Idaho schools Superintendent Tom Luna. You couldn't find a greater contrast to Agidius' performance than the presentation Luna made Thursday to the legislative budget committee.

"We know we have to continue to move forward. We cannot hunker down and wait for better times. We cannot tell a third-grader who is struggling today in math that you have to wait until the economy improves to get the assistance you need," he said.

But Luna was more than direct or even passionate. He was creative.

Luna proposes coming up with \$58.3 million in new dollars, most of it from a reserve in the public school endowment fund, and \$25.2 million in targeted cuts.

**CHEERS** ... to Magistrate John Judge of Moscow. Credit him with keeping the public informed about two juveniles - Austin Blake Medlock and Austin James Rickert, both 14 - who are accused of shooting at traffic last Friday near Helmer.

Because they are both 14 and charged with the equivalent of a felony, the case against Medlock and Rickert is presumed to be open. But a defense attorney for Medlock asked the record be sealed. Judge denied the motion.

So you now know these boys have been released to their parents' custody. You're aware parental supervision is to be constant. All guns in the family home must be removed. Both boys are required to wear electronic monitoring devices. Authorities can search them and their premises at any time.

If that information had been withheld, people would have relied on rumors and assumed the worst.

**JEERS** ... to freshman state Rep. Susan Fagan, R-Pullman. She's behind a bill to impose fees upon individuals who ask for large volumes of public records. Fagan is responding to expenses incurred at places like Palouse and Mesa, Wash.

That's bound to have a chilling effect on public record access. Besides, governments already have ways to limit their losses. They can ask for the records request to be clarified. They also can deliver the requested documents in increments as their own staff time and resources allow.

Fagan's bill may not go anywhere. In fact, she doesn't expect it will.

Instead, Fagan says she's making a point on behalf of beleaguered small city staffers.

But why would a newly minted lawmaker begin her tenure with an attempt to roll back the Sunshine Initiative? - M.T.