

It all comes down to who signs the paychecks. The Idaho Freedom Foundation's director Wayne Hoffman literally signs Hurst's and Iverson-Long's - who are nice guys who work their butts off and have skills I respect. But their abilities are beside the point.

The money in the account that pays their salaries is from political donations from people who support the Freedom Foundation's agenda, which can be found on their website.

NewWest.Net is a for-profit business. We make the money to pay staff and overhead through selling advertising to anybody who wants to buy it. (We'd sell to the Idaho Freedom Foundation if they wanted to buy.) Our ads are local businesses and corporations who respond to our sales staff or just call us up and buy space.

The sales staff and function is entirely separate from the editorial staff and function.

While it's true that I write mostly progressive-leaning columns (and they are always labeled "column" to distinguish from a "report") if you do some searching you'll find I've written some of not-very-liberal stuff. Then the lefty emailers harrass me. The fact that I get skewered by several political persuasions should say something.

Also, we have conservative guest columnists, guest writers and plenty of middle-of-the-road material on NewWest.Net.

In this day of struggling media, almost nobody can afford separate reporters and opinion writers. (Think of Dan Popkey of the Idaho Statesman.) That would be nice, but it's unrealistic. And, as has been pointed out, almost all journalists are capable of writing straight reports, AP-style, and opinion.

But it all comes down to the fact that NewWest.Net does not advocate for anything. There is a difference between "advocate" and "opine." Our opinion columns may endorse a particular point of view, but we would never go to a state legislature and try to influence legislation or a legislator. That's the bottom line difference between the two organizations, because the IdFreedomFoundation does exactly that.

And yes, NewWest.Net is a member of the Capitol Correspondents. This is our fourth year as members, and I am on the standing committee. We are also members of the Idaho Press Club, and have won some significant awards.

Someone commented that this is a stupid discussion. I strongly disagree. This is the kind of discussion that contributes to understanding, and I wish it happened more often. Thanks to all for some thought-provoking stuff.

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