OUR VIEW: Privacy in Idaho depends on who you are

By Murf Raquet, for the editorial board

Posted on: Friday, March 26, 2010

Privacy is a huge issue in Idaho.

State lawmakers annually trot out pieces of legislation intended to keep government - both state and federal - out of people's lives.

There is nothing wrong with such laws if they are applied evenly throughout all levels of society.

Unfortunately in Idaho it seems laws often are enacted at the behest of constituents who have the money to grease the wheels of government. Little sway is given to those who lack the political "clout" to influence legislators

The Senate recently passed a bill that allows hunting and fishing license information to be kept from the public, the theory being those records must be kept private lest someone use the information to do harm to the license holder.

When a ban on texting while driving was being considered, Senate President Pro Tem Robert Geddes, R-Soda Springs, said his constituents see the ban as another government infringement on personal freedom. That would be the freedom to engage in an activity that distracts drivers the same as driving with a blood-alcohol content over the legal limit.

The latest privacy test came this week when the Senate gave the OK for a study that would look into the cost of drug-testing Idahoans on public assistance.

Hungry? Before you get food stamps you need to pee in this cup, or hold out your arm for a little prick.

Children need medicine? Bleed a little for us, please.

Privacy doesn't seem to matter for those folks who, for whatever reason, need a little help.

We wonder where Geddes comes down on this issue.

Undoubtedly some state-aid recipients abuse the system - but it's safe to say that's not the case with most.

Those needing Medicaid, food stamps and other public assistance are far from being the addicts some legislators obviously assume they are. We find it offensive that lawmakers could resort to such an invasive practice to weed out those who abuse the system.