

OUR VIEW: That's funny Harwood, try comedy full time

By Murf Raquet, for the editorial board

It's nice to have a good laugh now and then - a real guffaw can change your outlook from gloomy to upbeat.

Politicians use comedy to get the attention of voters, to relieve tension during legislative debate or to insult an opponent a la Don Rickles.

Rep. Dick Harwood is no exception.

The St. Maries uber Republican, fresh from the squaw-is-not-an-insult tour a few sessions ago, is taking his latest act to the people. He's currently appearing on a double bill with Tom Luna and his education reform review.

And they're taking the Statehouse by storm.

Harwood on Wednesday kicked-off his latest salute to common sense by introducing a bill that would effectively eliminate lawsuits against the state and its megaload policy.

Harwood, the club owners in the Idaho Transportation Department and Big Oil that uses Idaho roadways to transport hundreds of oversized loads are upset some pesky Idaho residents had the gall to question ITD's oversight of the loads.

Seems a few folks were not happy with the department's ability to OK huge loads without any public input. And why not? ITD knows what's best for the roads and holding hearings just wastes time that is better spent running refinery parts to the border with Montana.

Harwood agrees and says his bill will make filing a lawsuit to stop the loads a financial burden on plaintiffs. If the bill is passed - and given the mood of the Legislature that will probably happen - anyone who files suit also will cough-up a bond of 5 percent of the load's value. If the plaintiff loses the case, the bond would be forfeited and a per-day penalty for the load delay would be assessed.

Good one Dick, we needed that - only we're not laughing.

Harwood has managed to make what little transparency remained even more opaque regarding the megaload flap.

Granted, some lawsuits are frivolous, but not all. They are a mechanism that's used to stop or alter an action. Most important the process is open and, in the case of the megaloads, about the only option left when the public demands answers.

Harwood would have none of that and that's sad to see in an elected official.

Buy your ticket and check your rights at the door.

We give his latest bit a big thumbs down.