

Accuracy helps in credibility, too

By Wayne Hoffman

I'm not sure what caused Chris Carlson to go after the Idaho Freedom Foundation in his May 4 commentary. And normally I would just ignore his statements, but there are so many errors and inaccuracies on the Idaho Freedom Foundation, I've decided to take a few minutes to respond.

First, Mr. Carlson starts out with an unfounded and often repeated claim that the Idaho Freedom Foundation won't disclose the names of its supporters. One only needs to take a look at our May 19 annual banquet, which has two dozen sponsors and co-hosts who have decided to publicly put their names behind our event. Similarly, our 2011 Idaho Report on Government Waste lists the names of many, many fine Idahoans who have chosen to support IFF and its research and education mission. There's no hiding. Supporters are listed there in plain sight.

The reason certain liberals are angry is that I have not released a complete and total list of IFF's donors. They want the names of ALL of our donors. Every last one, with dollar amounts assigned.

I don't understand what all the hubbub is about. First, there's nothing unusual about our practice to respect our donors' right to privacy. Many, many non-profit organizations have a policy not to disclose the names of donors unless donors agree to have their names public. Donor anonymity exists for a number of different reasons. Some people believe the greatest gifts are the ones given in private, without fanfare and without public accolades. Some people fear reprisal for giving to certain organizations, or for singling out one organization rather than another. Some people don't want to be identified as having the capacity to give, out of concern they'll be harassed for money by other organizations. There are any number of reasons why people would want to remain anonymous, and that's their right. Our donors decide on their own which status they prefer.

Interestingly, for the last decade, two non-profit organizations, United Vision for Idaho and the Catholic Charities of Idaho, have attempted to influence the Legislature, the same as IFF. And yet, for some strange reason, the media and other liberals have focused their animus entirely on IFF. My friends in the media and from the Left haven't demanded complete donor lists from UVI or CCI in order to figure out who is funding them. IFF, on the other hand, is constantly inundated with demands for complete donor lists despite our donors' right to give however quietly or loudly they choose to do so.

Second, as much as I hate repeating an inaccuracy, I will do so this time so that readers can understand my response. Idaho Freedom Foundation publishes *IdahoReporter.com*, a news bureau that covers state government. Mr. Carlson writes, "Hoffman's claim to run a real news organization (*IdahoReporter.com*) is disputed by the Capitol Correspondent's Association, the group that accredits legitimate reporters, and which refuses to characterize either he or his three researchers as reporters." This statement is just phony baloney. In fact, no one in the media has ever disputed the journalism of the people writing for *IdahoReporter.com*. Betsy Russell, CCA president, said in 2010 and in 2011 that no one is questioning the veracity of the journalism being done by *IdahoReporter.com*. She went on record to this effect in a 2010 Idaho Press Club newsletter article describing the reason CCA denied our reporters Statehouse credentials. Wrote Russell, "There was no antipathy toward these new members of the

Statehouse press corps; the correspondent who made the motion prefaced it with 'with great respect.' The type of organization simply doesn't fit the bylaws. ... I'd like to say that I, for one, am thrilled that there are additional reporters covering the Legislature - the more information that gets out there about what's going on in our state Capitol, the better." I disagree with the CCA's decision, and I've made that plain. But for Mr. Carlson to characterize CCA's decision as a repudiation of *IdahoReporter.com's* journalism is wholly inaccurate. And, contrary to Mr. Carlson's article, I have never asked to be re-credentialed by the CCA.

Third, Mr. Carlson reports that the Idaho Freedom Foundation was behind the "discredited" concept of nullification. Carlson fails to mention that constitutional scholars like Thomas Woods and Judge Andrew Napolitano back the concept of nullification and believe it to be a historically and constitutionally appropriate course of action for states seeking to stop federal tyranny. Carlson goes on to claim that Attorney General Lawrence Wasden said our legislation, House Bill 298, would never survive a court challenge. Actually, Wasden's opinion was on House Bill 59 and the concept of nullification. Wasden signed off on the constitutionality of House Bill 298, the bill that ultimately passed the Legislature.

Finally, never did I take credit for Gov. Otter's veto of House Bill 298 and replacing it with a stronger executive order. Specifically, what I said was, "Otter has done, by executive order what Sens. Monty Pearce, Steve Vick, Russ Fulcher, Chuck Winder and Sheryl Nuxoll and Reps. Vito Barbieri, Judy Boyle and I originally set out to do: prevent the operability of this unconstitutional federal law here in Idaho. Hmm, for someone wanting to take sole credit for something, I somehow managed to name seven people and give them credit for their involvement in the effort.

Well, that was fun. Now, I'm heading back as part of the "great right wing conspiracy" to promote freedom and limited government in the great state of Idaho.

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