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JEERS ... to Idaho school Superintendent Tom Luna. Campaigning at Lewiston Tuesday, he offered this assurance: "Technology is not replacing teachers," he said. "It's replacing chalk."

Considering Staples sells 12 sticks at \$1 a box, Idaho must have been consuming mounds of the stuff. Isn't it a relief to know Idaho can fund the investment of millions into online instruction and laptop computers simply by not buying any more?

Unfortunately, LunaTech isn't trading crates of chalk for technology. Next year, it siphons \$14.3 million from educator salaries. And in subsequent years, the bite on the payroll ratchets up to an estimated \$61 million to \$86.3 million annually.

Translation: fewer teachers, more crowded classrooms.

Besides, you won't find many chalkboards in classrooms these days. Teachers use white boards with markers - or they operate smart boards.

Luna knows all this.

Doesn't he?

Or is he just trying to put one over on you?

CHEERS ... to Washington State Auditor Brian Sonntag. Back in December 2009, he was the first to point out Washington could solve part of its cash-flow woes by offering delinquent taxpayers this deal: Pay what's owed in full and the state would waive penalties and interest.

Washington was one of only four states - Alaska, Utah and Wyoming are the remaining three - that hadn't tried a tax amnesty.

Gov. Chris Gregoire took him up on it.

For three months, the state accepted back taxes, no questions asked. It figured on a modest \$24 million return.

But it didn't find \$24 million.

It collected \$264 million for the state.

Plus, amnesty netted \$57 million more in tax payments toward local governments.

Only New Jersey's tax amnesty, which took in \$750 million in 2009, was more successful.

Some of that was expected - businesses with tax disputes decided to take a sure thing now and pay.

But the tax man had never heard about many of the nearly 8,900 enterprises that fessed up - 78 percent were small, 17 percent were medium and 5 percent were big firms.

With so much money, Washington may soften the blow of social safety net cuts - or even settle the state's budget debate. About \$300 million separates the competing House and Senate notions of how to balance Washington's estimated \$5 billion budget hole.

JEERS ... to Rex Rammell. Just when Rammell fatigue sets in, he gets in your face one more time.

Remember when his neglected private elk herd escaped, threatening to spread disease to eastern Idaho's wild elk herds? He blamed then-Gov. Jim Risch for eliminating his elk herd.

Recall when, as a candidate for governor, he suggested issuing a hunting tag on President Obama? Rather than apologize, he complained his political opponents were out to destroy him.

Recollect his plan to organize an LDS-only campaign rally where the faithful would discuss the "White Horse Prophecy" about saving the Constitution? When Rammell lost that election, he blamed the Mormons and threatened to move to Idaho County.

There's a pattern here, don't you think?

Now accused of poaching an elk, Rammell says the Fish and Game Department is at fault because its regulations were too vague.

When a judge rejected that defense, Rammell distributed fliers encouraging jurors to disregard the judge and, in effect, decide for themselves what the law says.

He could be charged with felony jury tampering. But if he is, you can bet Rammell will find somebody else to blame.

CHEERS ... to Karen Hendrickson and Linwood Laughy, both of Kooskia. Winners of this year's Max Dalton Open Government Award, Hendrickson and Laughy are as responsible as anyone for cracking open the megaload story.

Because of their efforts, first ConocoPhillips and now ExxonMobil have been required to submit their plans to move these huge transports up U.S. Highway 12 toward Montana to open, contested administrative hearings.

Thanks to them, the public has been able to critique detailed transportation plans megaload carriers developed.

And the Kooskia couple did a lot of the heavy lifting, from poring through documents and making their own on-site inspections to hunting down the paper trail to show the involvement of the Port of Lewiston, Gov. C. L. (Butch) Otter and the congressional delegation in this project.

CHEERS ... to Tim Woodward. It's hard to imagine, but after nearly 40 years as a columnist for the Idaho Statesman, Woodward is retiring June 1.

If you want to sample one of Woodward's best pieces, read the column he wrote in March describing the devastation mental illness had caused his family and how Medicaid programs have helped.

It was a gutsy thing to do, but Woodward wanted Idahoans to recognize who gets hurt when the Legislature batters health care programs for the poor.

Medicaid, he wrote, is "what an enlightened society does for those who weren't born as lucky as the rest of us. It doesn't just apply to 'other people.' It helps us all."

CHEERS ... to Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho. With 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden now taking up space on the ocean floor, Labrador is asking a pertinent question: Why is the U.S. still in Afghanistan? Wasn't the pursuit of bin Laden the reason we went there 10 years ago?

"I do think this is a great time to declare victory in Afghanistan and look for a way to get out of there," Labrador told the Idaho Statesman Monday.

That's a reference to the late Vermont Republican Sen. George David Aiken, who in the 1960s once famously declared the best way to escape the Vietnam quagmire was to declare victory and go home.

Good advice then. Good advice now. - M.T.