Don't count Democrats out

- *May 17th, 2011*
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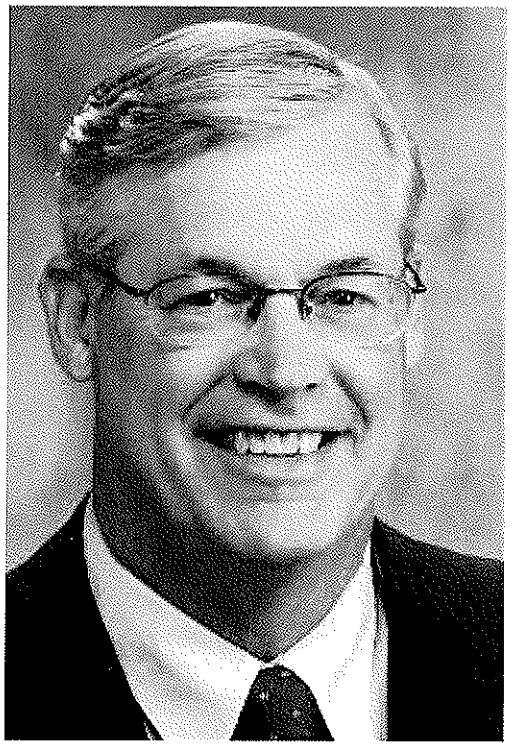
By Larry Grant for the Tribune
Turnabout



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When his obituary was mistakenly printed, Mark Twain wrote, "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated." Much like that, in response to Marty Trillhaase's May 9 editorial and on behalf of all Idaho Democrats, I have to say, sorry, Marty, the Democratic Party is, in fact, alive and well.

Trillhaase based his article on a poll from a former operative of the McCain-Palin campaign. If his numbers are correct, when compared to the latest Boise State University public policy survey, instead of being down, Democrats are actually up from where we were just last year. And the reason is clear - and Trillhaase alludes to it - Idaho Republicans do not represent most Idahoans on the issues.

Given Republican attacks on things such as education and health care, people who have been voting Republican out of habit are now waking up to the fact that Idaho Republicans are just not getting the job done.

But Idaho Democrats do stand for what most people want. Republicans want more tax cuts for the wealthy, even if it means wage cuts for everyone else. Democrats understand that the only way we get out of the economic mess created by Republicans and Wall Street is through growth, both for Idaho's businesses and the working men and women who make them profitable.

Idaho Democrats stand for education. Idaho Republicans passed legislation this last session to increase class sizes, fire teachers and impose unfunded mandates on school districts to buy computers. Democrats believe our children deserve the best education they can get and that teachers should be respected and rewarded for what they do. We see education as an investment, not an expense.

Idaho Democrats also stand for affordable health care. Idaho Republicans are fighting health care reform and now even want to take away Medicare from our seniors. Here in Idaho, they have already turned away millions in matching funds to pay for medical care for those who can least afford it. Democrats believe that cutting health care programs just forces even more people into emergency rooms, where we all pay for it anyway.

Adding insult to injury, Republicans are closing their primary elections, at taxpayer expense, and will become even more captive of their fringe. How long will independent, hard-working Idahoans put up with a government that refuses to represent them?

The bottom line is that Republicans have controlled the Idaho Legislature for decades. If there is anything wrong with government in Idaho, it is their fault. And, more and more, Idahoans are beginning to realize it.

Does that mean that those independent voters in Idaho are ready to declare themselves Democrats? Probably not. But despite what they call themselves, they may well be voting Democrat in the next election.

Grant is chairman of the Idaho Democratic Party.