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At your service Marty Trillhaase The Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to U.S. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho. Risch mistreated a Capitol Hill security officer so severely his behavior caught the eye of The Hill newspaper.

That cop stopped the freshman senator "for blowing by the Russell (Senate Office Building) security desk en route to the Capitol," the Hill reported.

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"Hey!" the cop yelled. Flagging Risch's attention, he asked for identification.

Here's how The Hill tells the rest of the story:

" 'Oh yes, I have an ID,' Risch responded, irritation creeping into his voice while he pulled out his wallet and flashed his senator's ID card.

" 'Will you remember me now?' asked Risch, who has been a member of the Senate for two and a half years.

"The cop turned slightly pink after Risch walked off."

Now there are two way to handle this kind of situation.

One is to be gracious and respect the fact that a cop is just doing a difficult, but vital job.

The other is to pull rank.

Anybody who watched the imperious Risch bully his way through the state Senate and later the governor's office wasn't surprised by the Hill report.

Outside Idaho, where he's a fresh face, Risch's demeanor makes a story.

Inside Idaho, it's just another day in the career of Jim Risch, public servant.

CHEERS ... to Sam Reed. If you're looking for a blemish on the record of Washington's Secretary of State, you'll have to invent it. Tuesday, Reed announced he would not seek a fourth term and plans to retire. What's not to like about someone who steered the state toward:

- \* Vote by mail - Under Reed, Washington became the second state in the country to enable voters to fill out a ballot in the comfort and privacy of their own homes. With the change has come a corresponding improvement in voter turnout.

- \* Top two primary - It was Reed who countered the political parties' ploy to strip Washingtonians of their coveted blanket primary. Reed championed top two, which allowed them to select the two most successful vote-getters in any primary election - Democrat, independent or Republican - and place those candidates on the November general election ballot.

- \* Open records - Reed maintained signing a petition placing an initiative or referendum on the ballot was a public act and should be subject to disclosure. But he's had to defend that posture in the courts

against groups who fear citizens can't be trusted with such information.

More than anything else, what's vital in a secretary of state is an impartiality that borders on a religious calling. Reed, a moderate Republican in the mold of former Gov. Dan Evans and former U.S. Congressman Joe Pritchard, more than met this test in the down-to-the-wire 2004 gubernatorial campaign.

Swinging back and forth between Democrat Chris Gregoire and Republican Dino Rossi, the final count elected Gregoire by 133 votes out of 2.8 million votes cast statewide.

"When I did the recount, Democrats were really angry at me early on," Reed told reporters Tuesday. "The Republicans were angry at me later on and all that. And some people said, 'How could you handle that?' ... And my reaction is, that's part of your job. If you don't have the courage to stand up and do the right thing, then you just flat-out shouldn't be in the office."

JEERS ... to former Idaho state Sen. Rod Beck, R-Boise. What is it about popular sovereignty Beck finds so abhorrent? Thanks to him, the GOP launched a successful court challenge that ended your right to cast an unfettered vote in the primary elections. Beginning next year, you'll first have to register as a Republican or Democrat.

That's designed to weed out moderate Republicans. But a compromise enables voters to register at the primary election polls, giving moderate GOP incumbents a fighting chance to survive.

Now Beck, a GOP regional chairman, has begun to talk about launching a convention system. In essence, the party regulars - precinct captains and central committee leaders - could block any candidate they deem insufficiently pure from the GOP primary ballot before you even enter the polls.

Such a system in Utah last year aborted the career of U.S. Sen. Bob Bennett.

If that happens, no Idaho lawmaker ever again would dare oppose nullifying a federal law - no matter how constitutionally treacherous such conduct becomes - or vote against allowing concealed weapons on college campuses.

Never again would a Congressman Mike Simpson propose a wilderness bill.

Never again would a Congressman Raul Labrador speak rationally about immigration reform.

Never again would a Sen. Mike Crapo at least recognize the need to discuss taxes toward balancing the budget in the "Gang of Six" talks.

The party line would be supreme and the price of political office would be kissing Beck's ring - or a somewhat larger object.

CHEERS ... to outgoing Lewiston School Board Chairman Daniel E. Rudolph. Rudolph's term should have ended today. But David Estes, campaign manager for Rudolph's successor, Dale Yochum, filed a lawsuit contending the transition should have occurred sooner.

The schools charter says one thing. State law says something else.

Either way, the dispute distracted the school district's limited time and resources. For a school board veteran whose focus remained on the kids, the situation was unacceptable.

So Rudolph resigned, freed up the seat for Yochum, thanked his colleagues and grabbed his nameplate.

You won't find a classier way to exit the public

stage. - M.T.