

Witnessing Rammell's slow-moving train wreck

Marty Trillhaase The Lewiston Tribune | [1 comment](#)

If Rex Rammell's tale were strictly a political one, his 15 minutes of fame would be up.

He lost last year's GOP gubernatorial primary to Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter by more than a 2-to-1 margin. He carried only two counties - Benewah and Idaho - which explains his move to the Grange-

ville area.

Two years earlier, he did no better than 5 percent against U.S. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho.

In 2004, he got only 35.7 percent of the vote against state Rep. Mack Shirley, R-Rexburg. In 2002, he ran fourth in a five-way Republican primary for a seat in the Idaho House.

He self-financed his campaigns while declaring bankruptcy.

He famously joked about getting an "Obamatag" to hunt President Obama, then urged everybody to just lighten up and get a sense of humor.

He played the LDS card - Rammell's a Mormon - by planning to hold campaign rallies only for LDS male members in good standing. He trotted out the White Horse Prophecy - purportedly tied to church founder Joseph Smith's prediction that the U.S. Constitution would "hang by a thread" and be rescued by Mormon elders. But when the vote in eastern Idaho turned against him, Rammell bashed the LDS community, which he said "did not step up to the plate and stand up for righteous men."

So why is his story still compelling? Look for the answer not on the campaign trail but in the courtroom.

Rammell got lucky once. State lawmakers forgave his \$750,000 in fines imposed nearly a decade ago when his eastern Idaho elk ranch violated a slew of state regulations meant to protect Idaho's prized elk herds from contracting incurable chronic wasting disease. Perhaps he believed no law applied to him.

Then-Gov. Risch tried to disabuse him of that notion. Rammell got into trouble again in 2006 when his herd escaped. Risch ordered the animals hunted down and destroyed.

The lesson didn't take. A year ago, he got caught poaching an elk in eastern Idaho. He threatened Fish and Game officers. Labeled them Nazis. He blamed the agency's

regulations. Declared those confusing. When the judge refused to allow that as a defense, Rammell started tampering with the jury - urging them to ignore the judge's instructions.

He eventually pleaded guilty to both charges.

After he headed north, Rammell urged Idaho County residents to kill wolves in violation of federal law.

He got himself arrested for allegedly assaulting and grabbing William Shira of Kooskia twice by the neck on Sept. 8.

He thumbed his nose at Magistrate Judge Jeff P. Payne, declaring himself a "de jure" citizen who no longer was "a member of the corporate state of Idaho,"

Then he tripped up. Rammell told investigators he had been bear hunting at the time of the altercation. How could that be? His hunting privileges had been suspended. Isn't that like telling the traffic cop you were so busy fumbling with a bottle of liquor you failed to notice you were speeding?

So Tuesday, Fish and Game charged Rammell with four counts: purchasing a hunting tag while his license had been revoked, purchasing an elk tag and hunting while his privileges were revoked.

However strong the inclination to stop, it's impossible to resist watching this slow-moving train wreck.

Why else do you think you're reading this now? - M.T.