

# Check the code

Posted: Friday, January 27, 2012 12:00 am | *Updated: 7:00 pm, Thu Jan 26, 2012.*

Marty Trillhaase

JEERS ... to Washington state Rep. Matt Shea, R-Spokane Valley. With the Legislature now positioned to pass the same-sex marriage law Gov. Chris Gregoire proposed, Shea has resorted to mendacity.

Shea issued this warning: Enact this law and businesses could be sued for refusing to accommodate gay weddings.

"Very clearly, private businesses would be subjected to massive new lawsuits if they decide to exercise their conscience and refuse to participate in a same sex-marriage ceremony," said Shea, who called it a clear violation of religious liberty.

OK, take a breath, Rep. Shea. Look up Washington's civil rights law. Since 2006, it's been illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. That goes for housing, employment and commerce.

In other words, a florist who refuses to do business with a gay couple for that reason today is guilty of discrimination and subject to penalties. Whether Washington recognizes gay marriage has nothing to do with it.

No church can be compelled to perform a same-sex marriage ceremony. That's constitutional, and nobody's trying to change it.

How could you, a lawyer and a two-term legislator, miss that, Rep. Shea?

You weren't trying to fool us, were you?

JEERS ... to Idaho House Assistant Majority Leader Scott Bedke, R-Oakley. Says Bedke, he's just trying to stop people -homeless and otherwise - from camping on the lawns near the state Capitol building.

That it just happens to halt the Occupy Boise movement is, well, a coincidence.

"I don't think it was ever the state's intention to allow camping on the grounds adjacent to the Capitol or at the Capitol itself," Bedke said Thursday.

Or as Republican political consultant Mike Murphy would put it, "If Napoleon had nuclear subs, we'd all be speaking French."

The House passed Bedke's "anti-camping" bill, 54-16. Only three Republicans - Moscow's Tom Trail as well as Janice McGeachin of Idaho Falls and Phil Hart of Athol - opposed it.

This isn't about camping. It's about a group of people pitching tents on the old Ada County Courthouse grounds near the Capitol as a symbol. The act of not leaving is a protest.

Lord knows, they have plenty of cause:

- A state government that argues about who should draw the political maps while 229,000 people are on food stamps.
- A leadership that ignores - in fact, actively opposes - doing anything substantial about the 260,000 Idahoans who have no health insurance.
- A collection of politicians who would hand tax breaks to their wealthy cronies when unemployment hovers at 8.4 percent and when the state's per capita income falls below all but a handful of states.

Worse, this bill deprives Occupy Boise members of their rights. The minute it takes effect - which can't be soon enough for Bedke and company - the state is authorized to take the protesters' property and dispose of it as trash. No hearings before a judge. Just the government arbitrarily confiscating private property.

Is this how Bedke would treat people protesting federal wolf policies or supporting the Second Amendment?

And how would Bedke feel about an Occupy Boise movement if the cause wasn't social justice but eliminating abortions?

Au contraire.

CHEERS ... to former Idaho Gov. Phil Batt. When the Idaho GOP leadership gets out of line, you can always count on Batt to scold it.

Batt - whose triage rescued Republicans from a succession of defeats in the early 1990s and who then became the first Republican governor in a quarter-century - bluntly called out House Speaker Lawrence Denney, R-Midvale, and Republican Party Chairman Norm Semanko.

The two party leaders tried to gut the independence of Idaho's citizens redistricting commission by firing their appointees - former Rep. Dolores Crow, R-Nampa, and former Rep. Randy Hansen, R-Twin Falls - because they'd been too easy on the Democrats.

Idaho's Supreme Court slapped down that attempt, but not before Batt weighed in.

"Now our party leaders want to sully the reapportionment process for more political gain. I guess they want 100 percent Republicans of their own variety (Dolores and I probably don't qualify)," Batt wrote. "But I predict that Republican dominance in Idaho will decline rather than grow if we say neutrality has no place in reapportionment, and that the commission must do it our way or else."

Noticeably silent: Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter, who ducked the question Wednesday at an Idaho Press Club forum.

JEERS ... to Idaho Senate President Brent Hill, R-Rexburg. Hill is the epitome of transparency and ethical political behavior. Yet he so mishandled the Sen. John McGee fiasco that in comparison, Boss Denney's mild rebuke of tax scofflaw Phil Hart last year looks like a public flogging.

And Hart was only guilty of hypocrisy - refusing to pay his own taxes while serving on the House Revenue and Taxation Committee.

McGee, R-Caldwell, on the other hand, committed a crime - one that could have killed somebody.

On Father's Day, he famously got snookered at a Boise country club, then attempted to drive off in a stolen Ford Excursion and cargo trailer before jackknifing it. After making \$12,000 in restitution to the SUV's owner, McGee's felony grand theft charge disappeared, but he pleaded guilty to drunken driving.

Thereafter, McGee stonewalled, refusing all interviews until his leadership job went on the line.

In taking no steps to discipline McGee, Hill made him the new standard for ethical behavior in the Senate.

Then, when the GOP caucus emerged from closed doors, Hill implied the group was "united" in supporting McGee.

Turns out, the vote was much closer. Nine senators went public in their opposition to McGee.

Where do the remaining 18 GOP senators, including Lewiston's Dan Johnson, stand? - M.T.