

For Idaho GOP, integrity means going along

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Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

You know Idaho's dominant political party is having a bad day when its platform reads like it was written by people who spend too much time with their cats, watching Fox News and not getting enough fresh air.

Now these several hundred political shut-ins want to set policy for the rest of us.

Even worse, a lot of Republicans are too timid to stand up to them.

Meeting in Idaho Falls on June 26, 2010, the Idaho Republican Party embraced the following:

- Having state lawmakers, instead of you, selecting Idaho's two U.S. senators - something that hasn't occurred since the 17th Amendment was adopted 99 years ago to clean up rampant corruption in the Senate.
- Putting state lawmakers in charge of realigning legislative and congressional districts to population changes every 10 years, a task Idaho voters assigned to an independent citizen commission two decades ago.
- Touching off a new Civil War by openly defying federal laws. Known as nullification, the concept has been repudiated by credible constitutional scholars, the U.S. Supreme Court and Attorney General Lawrence Wasden.
- Laying claim to the federal lands within Idaho, an act that would bankrupt the state budget the instant Idaho had to start putting out wildfires.
- Abolishing the Federal Reserve and restoring the gold and silver standard. At the very least, you're talking about massive economic disruption except, possibly, for anyone with a gold or silver mine.
- Eliminating taxes to support "federally mandated health care." So, in other words, the country would continue borrowing money from China to support Medicare and Medicaid.
- Promoting "integrity in government." Now there's a good idea. Unfortunately, the party that gave you tax scofflaw Rep. Phil Hart, the ethically challenged House Speaker Lawrence Denney, disgraced state Tax Commission Chairman Royce Chigbrow, the revolving door between public trust and lucrative lobbying jobs, and the deviousness of state schools Superintendent Tom Luna wasn't talking about ethics. To the Idaho GOP, "integrity in government" is about following the party line - literally. It means signing a loyalty oath, pledging to follow each of the above as well as another 150-odd platform planks.

So every Republican is obliged to sign his name to the platform or spell out where he disagrees.

To their credit, some have shown some independence. Most, however, are going along. Maybe they're pandering to the party base on the eve of the GOP's closed primary election. Perhaps they haven't read what's in it.

The most disturbing news is how U.S. Rep. Raul Labrador, R-Idaho, goes along with this platform without drawing any exceptions. His opponent, Reed C. McCandless of Moscow, did not respond.

How does Labrador, a man with the nerve and smarts to serve in Congress and perhaps, someday, as Idaho governor, endorse such fringe positions without any clarification or reservation?

Contrast that with 2nd Congressional District Rep. Mike Simpson, who issued a detailed response, including his opposition to repealing the 17th Amendment, nullification, abolishing the Federal Reserve and assuming ownership of federal lands.

See for yourself at idgop.org.

Elsewhere:

- Legislative District 5 - Senate: Gresham Bouma of Viola quibbled around the edges. Barrett Schroeder of Moscow rejected the pledge outright. In House 5-A, Cindy Agidius of Moscow agreed with virtually everything. In House 5-B, Kenneth B. De Vries of St. Maries took the time to issue a series of points where he disagrees with the platform. Bob Hassoldt of Kendrick didn't respond.
- Legislative District 6 - Senate: Neither Sen. Dan Johnson, R-Lewiston, nor his challenger, Rep. Jeff Nasset, R-Lewiston, responded. In House 6-A, Lewiston City Councilor Thyra K. Stevenson agreed with the whole platform. In House 6-B, Daniel Santiago of Lewiston drew a few differences.
- Legislative District 7 - Senate: With a few exceptions, Sen. Sheryl Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood, and her GOP challenger, Mary Wade Heston of Kellogg, signed on. In House 7-A, Rex Rammell of Kooskia agreed entirely. Rep. Shannon McMillan, R-Silverton, had one exception. Ed Galloway of Lenore didn't respond. In House 7-B, Rep. Paul Shepherd, R-Riggins, gave the platform an enthusiastic thumbs up: "We have worked hard on that platform and stand by it." - M.T.