

OPINION

"Looks like we've got us a dragon by the tail."

NASA astronaut **Donald Pettit** after he used the International Space Station's 58-foot robot arm Friday to snare SpaceX's Dragon capsule, the first time a business enterprise delivered a supply ship to the space station

Precinct Committeemen Latest Chess Piece in Political Game in Idaho

Most years, the job of precinct committee person (each major party has them) flies quietly under the radar. In Idaho (and some other places), not this year.



Randy Stapilus
Ridenbaugh.com

Across Idaho, battles for precinct committee positions have erupted, reflecting an ideological struggle inside the Republican Party.

One of the problems Idaho Democrats long have had is the lack, in many places, of precinct leaders. These are important, basic, building-block positions for party organization, important for local organizing and choosing local party leaders, and sometime filling vacancies for offices like state legislator. In Idaho, the Republican Party long has outshone the Democrats in getting many more of those spots filled. (Neither party fills them all.)

Ordinarily, only one person runs for nearly all precinct committee spots, but this year Republicans had an unusually large number of contests, in places around the state. They became intense enough that I spotted something I've not seen before, in any year – a campaign website devoted to one precinct, aimed at one political party. It is Kootenai County precinct 61; the Web writers describe it as "A resource for the Republican Party members of Precinct 61."

In Twin Falls County, the Republican Liberty Caucus ran a slew of challenges to often-veteran precinct officers, and won almost a third of the seats. The mainstream party leaders expressed relief that the challengers hadn't won a majority, but they'd better not count on the pressure to ease off soon. Many races were competitive; one was decided by a coin flip.

Another coin flip came in Ada County, home to a large pile of contests, where Roger Brown, a Ron Paul activist, unseated governor's aide Roger Brown. In another race, a party nominee for state legislator lost a precinct office. One of the most prominent Paul backers in the county, former legislative candidate Lucas Baumbach, was defeated. But Paul backers won more than a third of the precinct seats in the Ada County party organization, enough to have impact.

Overall, the Paul forces fell short of the statewide precinct numbers they would have needed for their more ambitious projects, like the attempt to shift Idaho national convention votes to Paul from Mitt Romney. (That one never felt like much of a starter.) In Bannock County, a county meeting projected by one veteran county party official, Jim Johnston, as "a bloodbath," turned out sedate.

But getting even a third of the votes in a county organization has its uses. Here's an indication how.

Kootenai County Republicans earlier this year asked Texas congressional candidate Richard Mack to speak to the party's Lincoln Day dinner. After the invitation was made, 14 precinct committee members sent a letter to the local party leadership objecting to Mack, saying his "support of the Republican Party and Republican Party candidates is inconsistent, intermittent and questionable." The battle raged for a while and went public. Eventually, the Mack invitation held up, he spoke, and the event was held without incident. Not without trepidation on Mack's part: He told reporters he had never felt as unwelcome as he had before coming to Coeur d'Alene.

It doesn't take a majority to create a civil war. Just ask the South.

Randy Stapilus is a former Idaho newspaper reporter and editor, author of The Idaho Political Field Guide, and blogs at www.ridenbaugh.com.

TIMES-NEWS

John Pfeifer, Publisher Autumn Agar, Editor

The members of the editorial board and writers of editorials are John Pfeifer, Autumn Agar, Victor Friesen, and Jess Johnson.

ONLINE: Join our community of readers at Facebook.com/thetimesnews, or register an account at Magicvalley.com and respond to any of the local opinions or stories in today's edition.

ON PAPER OR VIA EMAIL: The Times-News welcomes letters from readers, but please limit letters to 300 words. Include your signature, mailing address and phone number. Letters may be brought to our Twin Falls office; mailed to P.O. Box 548, Twin Falls, ID 83303; faxed to (208) 734-5538; or e-mailed to letters@magicvalley.com.

JOIN THE DISCUSSION: Voice your opinion with local bloggers: Progressive Voice and Conservative Corner on the opinion page at Magicvalley.com.

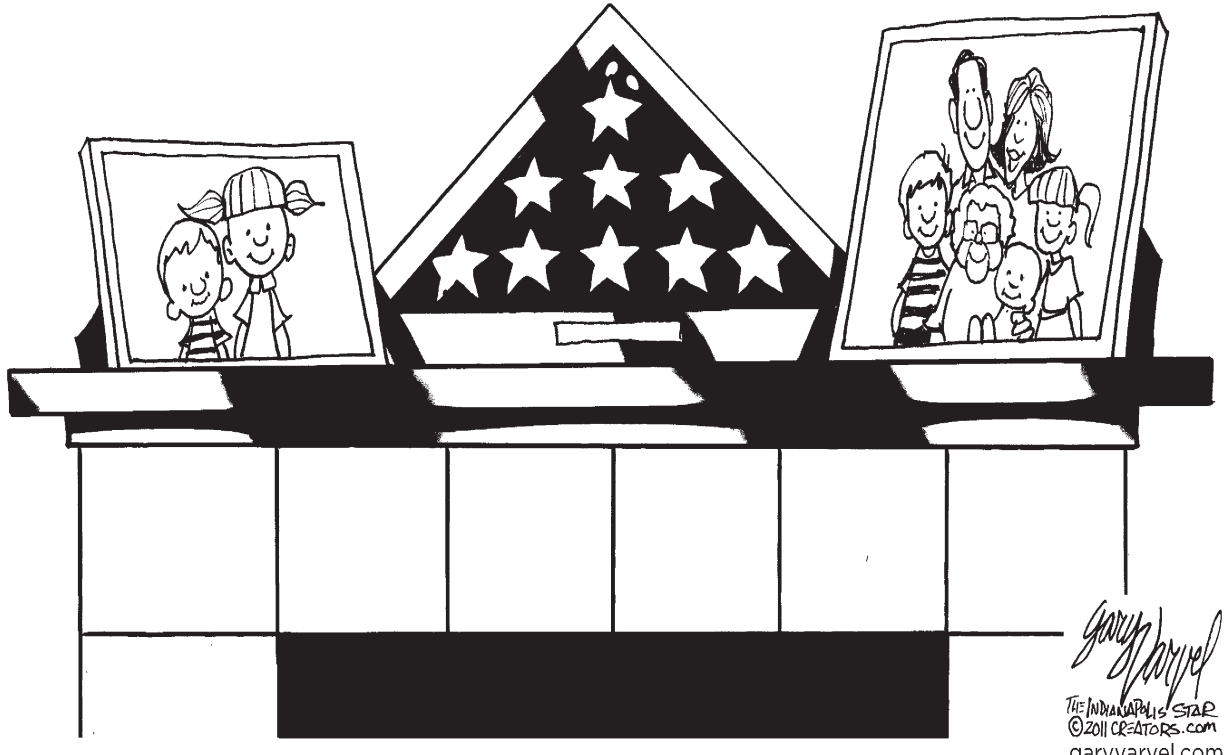
QUOTE

"That one was like Christmas."

Devils rookie **Adam Henrique** after he scored the winning goal in overtime Friday to defeat the rival New York Rangers 3-2 and send New Jersey to the Stanley Cup finals.

"Those things which are precious are saved only by sacrifice."

—DAVID KENYON WEBSTER
U.S. ARMY OFFICER AND WRITER



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Precinct Committee Elections Proved Every Vote Counts

I appreciate your turnout at the polls last week, and I am thankful and honored by the great support and votes of confidence from many neighbors and friends.

Steve Millington won the top spot by one vote, and my congratulations have gone out to him. I hope to keep my feet wet in political waters that affect our everyday lives. I also look forward to Mr. Millington's energy, dedication and listening ear as our Buhl No. 2 Republican Precinct committeeman. He has a wide background to bring to the position.

P.S. There were some other close or tied precinct races. Let's remember these next time (November) as incentives to encourage our circles of neighbors and friends to get to the polls — that "Every Vote Counts!" Politics closest to the people, or local politics are the most efficient. If you have concerns or suggestions, start by contacting your precinct committeeman.

JAN WIMBERLEY Buhl

The Republican Party Has Too Much Power in Idaho

Remember years ago when

we respected our lawmakers and when the two-party system worked in Idaho? Or were we ever satisfied with the Idaho Legislature? Today, we certainly see dysfunction in the Boise Capitol.

A recent article printed in the *Times-News* regarding the Republican leadership and its efforts to control and keep legislators "in line" was disturbing. The Republican Party in Idaho serves as an exclusive club — narrow in scope and closed except to those who are the most conservative among the members. What happened to a range of political points of views, including moderate or even progressive Republican voices? They are hardly welcomed in the Republican club anymore and are run off by competitors recruited by the party itself.

The Republican Party has too much power in Idaho. It needs competition, even as it tries to fight it. The people of Idaho want and deserve good government. During this 2012 election, help to elect some new voices — even Democratic ones — and provide some balance in the Statehouse. Above all, vote — it is your privilege and responsibility. After all, we get the government we choose.

ROSEMARY FORNSHELL Twin Falls
(Editor's note: Rosemary Fornshell is the Democratic candidate for Representa-

Poo on Softball Fields Not Leftover from Temporary Dog Park

In response to Robin Waters' letter to the editor, "Dog Owners Were Not Responsible Users of the Softball Fields":

Mr./Ms. Waters: As a member of the Magic Valley Canine Social Club, I take deep offense to the headline of your letter. During the time the city of Twin Falls allowed the public to use the baseball fields at Frontier Park, we meticulously maintained those fields, collecting every morsel of dog waste. We also made sure those who failed to pick up after their dogs understood where the poo bags were located, where the trash can(s) were, and that it was not acceptable to leave any waste behind.

It has not been officially sanctioned by the city to use the baseball fields as a dog park since mid-March. During the time the city of Twin Falls officially allowed the public to use the ball fields, we left it spotless: The current poo you are finding has no relation with that time. On the last day, at least 15 to 20 members of the Magic Valley Canine Social Club spent a couple of hours combing both the large and small baseball fields, and we picked up every single pile that was

there.

Stating that dog owners "were not" responsible users — but then actually complaining about current problems suggests either the headline misstates your real position or your letter mixing past tense and current tense statements caused the confusion. If you are currently having problems with dog waste, those are not responsible pet owners, and should be fined accordingly.

TOM YOUNG Twin Falls

Are Elected Officials Fulfilling Their Dreams or Ours?

Maybe it was just a poor choice of words but in the May 24 issue of the *Times-News*, Rep. Mike Simpson says "he has no idea when 'his' longtime dream will be realized" while speaking to a group of environmentalists.

It doesn't matter to me what the subject was about; but what does concern me is that I was always under the impression that our elected officials were supposed to realize "our" long-term dreams and not their own. Isn't that why we elected them to begin with?

Makes me wonder and worry just how many other elected officials are here to realize "their" own long-term dreams.

MARK SPITZ Jerome

Times-News Seeks Political Commentary for Sunday Opinion

The *Times-News* would like to invite readers to participate in a lively discussion every Sunday in the Opinion section.

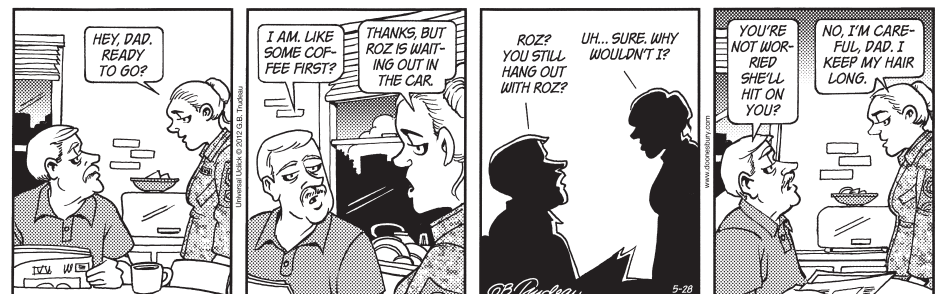
In a few weeks, we will begin running a Sunday feature called "Point/Counterpoint." We are looking for writers who

would be interested in taking a side on a local political issue and writing a 400-word essay explaining your perspective. Your essay will be paired with a piece taking the opposing point of view.

Interested? Send a letter to Editor Autumn Agar explaining who you are and

why you would be a good "Point/Counterpoint" commentator. Include a list of political topics that interest you. Send your letter by email to aagar@magicvalley.com or to Autumn Agar, Times-News, 132 Fairfield St. W, Twin Falls, ID 83301.

Doonesbury by Garry Trudeau



Mallard Fillmore by Bruce Tinsley

