

## **Extremism in defense of callousness is no virtue**

*Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune*

If Lawrence Denney were just one more talk radio crank, his dissociation from reality would be another form of entertainment for ditto heads.

And if Mike Moyle were just another Republican Party conventioneer with a self-righteous disregard for evidence, he might settle for his 15 minutes of fame on a cable news outlet.

But Denney, R-Midvale, is the speaker of the Idaho House.

Moyle, R-Star, is the majority leader of that body.

With rare exceptions, what they say goes.

And when it comes to Obamacare, here's what they say: "Resistance usually comes at a cost, but the state of Idaho must resist Obamacare. The cost of not resisting will be much higher."

Translation: They resist. You pay.

Denney and Moyle want Idaho to refuse expanding Medicaid coverage to poor adults - an option the U.S. Supreme Court gave states when it validated Obamacare.

Who cares if that condemns 85,000 Idahoans to poor health? Without coverage, they forgo preventive care. They're more likely to see a physician after an ailment has progressed into a crisis.

And who cares if this is bad for taxpayers?

People without health insurance still get help. And when they do, it's often Idaho's medically indigent program that pays the bills - usually split evenly between local and state taxpayers. Counties pick up the first \$11,000 of any medically indigent claim. A state catastrophic health care fund pays the rest.

Improved management contained the program's costs for a few years, but medical inflation and caseload growth have it back on a trajectory pointing toward \$61 million a year.

The Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell added some new facts.

Idaho's program is the only one in the nation that is incident-based. If a patient can't pay his medical bill within five years, the counties and the state step in.

And Idaho may be the only state to stick local and state taxpayers with the entire bill. Of the 23 states that hold counties responsible for indigent care, most rely upon county hospitals - which already tap into Medicaid support.

If the Kaiser Family Foundation is correct, Idaho can expect medical inflation to continue at 7 percent a year. So supporting the medically indigent program will run about \$436 million during the next six years - unless Idaho accepts Obamacare's plan to expand Medicaid beginning in 2014.

For the first two years, the federal government will pay 100 percent of the costs. After that, federal support slides to 90 percent.

Kaiser says Idaho's share of covering the expansion for the first six years will run about \$101 million to \$133 million. Since 90 percent of the people now turning to the medically indigent program would get Medicaid, Idaho stands to save about \$300 million during the six years.

Speaking to the Associated Press, Moyle toned it down a smidge - he might entertain some facts but he hasn't heard anything yet that would dissuade him from opposing Medicaid expansion.

What do you call it when leaders get so caught up in partisan political warfare that they've lost sight of the common good?

What does it mean when someone with his hands on the levers of government can't shift his thinking beyond bumper sticker slogans?

How do you explain political elites who are so callously indifferent toward collateral damage?

And where is their concern about government bloat and inefficiency?

If extremism has a face, Denney and Moyle see it each morning while shaving. - M.T.