

# If this is not 'a woman thing,' what else is it?

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

Senate Resources Committee Chairman Monte Pearce should just come clean about it. The only reason the New Plymouth Republican is stalling Joan Hurlock's appointment to the Idaho Fish and Game Commission is her gender. Hurlock of Buhl is only the second woman named to the panel. The first was Nancy Hadley of Sandpoint, who served from 1997 to 2005.

Now where would we get such an idea?

Could it be the unequal treatment Pearce has afforded the two Fish and Game appointees Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter named in June? Both Challis miner Will Naillon and Hurlock were thoroughly vetted by an eight-member panel. In Hurlock's case, all eight members recommended she be included among the three names forwarded to Otter.

While Naillon sailed through his confirmation hearing, Hurlock has been cooling her heels.

Could it be that a Fish and Game appointee almost never gets blocked? In the 75 years of its existence, 62 people have been named to the panel - and only once has the Senate said no. That unlucky individual was Robert W. Thomas of Coeur d'Alene, who in 1974 got labeled an "extreme environmentalist" by a Republican state Senate looking to deliver a rare rebuke to then Gov. Cecil D. Andrus in an election year. Hurlock, on the other hand, was appointed by a Republican governor who is decidedly anti-environmentalist.

Could it be the use of a bogus allegation that she's not sufficiently active as a hunter or an angler? Hurlock has held hunting and fishing licenses. At the time of her appointment, she talked about "being an advocate for getting our youth more involved in hunting, fishing and the great outdoors in Idaho."

There is no litmus test for serving on the commission. Preserving, protecting, perpetuating and managing wildlife is a statewide responsibility. It doesn't fall merely on the one in four Idahoans who hunt or fish.

But Hurlock is a former Capitol Hill police officer, a former forensic chemist for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and a marksman with a gun. Her father was a game warden in California. Her fellow Fish and Game Commission members are standing behind her. So is Otter.

Or could it be Idaho's culture?

This is, after all, the state where former Transportation Director Pam Lowe's wrongful termination lawsuit resulted in a \$750,000 settlement. Whether then-Transportation Board member Gary Blick actually said, as Lowe claimed, "No little girl would be able to run this

department," the fact remains as soon as Lowe got the boot, the board brought in a man to replace her and paid him \$22,000 more.

This is, after all, a state where the governor's top male lieutenants make, on average, about \$18,000 a year more than his top female aides. Or a state with the 10th largest wage gap between men and women.

This is, after all, a state where a Legislature that is 3-to-1 men routinely makes war on a public teaching profession that is 3-to-1 female.

A state where all five Supreme Court justices are men, where the funding for the state women's commission has all but dried up and a state where it took a lawsuit to provide inmates at the women's prison with the same programs available to male inmates.

Pick your flavor of misogyny: Sen. Chuck Winder, R-Boise, attempting to impose a vaginal probe on women before they can obtain an abortion. Former Rep. Carlos Bilbao, R-Emmett, trying to undermine their contraceptive health care insurance coverage. Or Rep. Ron Mendive, R-Coeur d'Alene, equating abortion with prostitution.

Still skeptical that Pearce and a crew of good old boys from the Magic Valley want to replace Hurlock with a good old boy from the Magic Valley?

Consider what Jack Oyler of Filer told the Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell. Said Oyler, who served on the panel that vetted Hurlock and who now wants her gone, "This is not a woman thing with me. It's qualifications."

When someone says "This is not a woman thing," it usually is. - M.T.