

Ashamed

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to U.S. Sens. Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, R-Idaho. Disagreements aside, rarely have they given us reason to be ashamed of them.

Wednesday was just such a day.

West Virginia Democrat Joe Manchin and Pennsylvania Republican Pat Toomey had worked out a modest gun purchasing background check compromise. They needed 60 votes

Thanks to Crapo, Risch and others, they came up six votes short.

What were Crapo and Risch afraid of?

Not the bill. This wasn't an assault weapons ban. It didn't curtail the size of high-capacity magazines. The Second Amendment remained intact.

Manchin-Toomey merely extended a law that already applies to gun sales in retail stores to those purchased at gun shows. It didn't interfere with most private sales. It banned any attempt to transform background checks into a registry.

Not the voters. Polling showed 90 percent support for extended background checks. Even among gun owners, the idea was backed by 86 percent. There's every reason to think Idahoans were no different.

Crapo has won every campaign he's ever waged in 30 years. Sometimes he's faced no opposition at all. Always, he's had overwhelming advantages in campaign resources.

Risch has an even more storied career - Ada County prosecutor, state Senate leader, lieutenant governor, governor and U.S. senator.

In a one-party state, they have a lifetime lock on office.

Here was an opportunity to spend some of that political capital. Instead, on the day the U.S. Senate failed to heed the warning of the Newtown, Conn., massacre, Crapo and Risch actually voted to weaken gun safety laws.

No, not the laws in Idaho. The laws in other states.

It's called conceal/carry reciprocity. And it means anyone who carries a concealed weapon in a place where they pass out permits like M&Ms can walk around Central Park packing heat - even though under their own local laws, the citizens of New York City can not.

Imagine the reverse. Say a New York businessman could impose his state's standards to Idaho water law or Idaho school curriculum. How long would it take Crapo and Risch to scream: "States' rights"?

Fortunately, it fell three votes short of passage.

Crapo and Risch do not descend from timid men. Idaho elected senators who stood up to pressure. Frank Church fought against the Vietnam War. Len Jordan opposed his own president's Supreme Court nominees. James McClure supported the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. Larry Craig stood up for immigration reform.

But you'd hardly know it from the way they kowtow to the National Rifle Association.

How times have changed.

JEERS ... to Lewiston School Board member Dale Yochum and Taxpayers Against Unfair Taxation Chairman David Estes.

Think back 25 months.

Lewiston had an opportunity to replace its 85-year-old, obsolete and cramped high school at a bargain.

Low interest rates and a construction industry slump put the price tag near \$52 million.

But as leaders of TAUT, Yochum and Estes reassured stressed-out taxpayers they could deliver a modernized and renovated Lewiston High School for half the money.

Two years after the bond failed, what has TAUT come up with?

Not a \$26 million project.

Nor a \$52 million plan.

TAUT wants to spend \$66.6 million.

Instead of building a new school in two years, TAUT intends to transform LHS into a permanent job site. By the time its three phases are complete, today's seniors will be attending their own kids' graduation.

What about inflation? If construction drags out 20 years, that \$66.6 million figure could easily morph into \$108 million.

Rather than passing a bond and getting construction funds up front, TAUT prefers to run a plant facility levy - which delivers cash in yearly increments. Imagine building a school in chunks. Talk about the potential for waste and inefficiency.

Not to worry, Estes says. His own expert, RGU Architecture of Lewiston, is wrong. Estes believes the project can be done for less than \$50 million.

Isn't \$50 million about where we started?

CHEERS ... to former Idaho state Sen. Tim Corder, R-Mountain Home. He's calling out a member of his own team, Senate Education Committee Chairman John Goedde, R-Coeur d'Alene.

A sponsor of the infamous Luna laws that voters overwhelmingly repealed last year, Goedde supported re-enacting portions of those laws that undermined teacher employment rights.

Says Corder: "For the Greeks, hubris was a crime. Those who committed such egregious and heinous acts against the very liberties of mankind were prohibited from holding public office. Today, by public apathy, we reward (or at least fail to punish) public displays of wanton disregard for the public will (hubris) with continued terms in office - and other things."

JEERS ... to Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho. He's beating his chest about the Antiquities Act, which empowered presidents from Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton to spare national jewels such as the Grand Canyon from exploitation.

Labrador believes that President Barack Obama would use the Antiquities Act to create a Boulder-White Clouds national monument. That's a well-founded fear. Before they left office, Interior Secretary - and former Idaho Gov. - Dirk Kempthorne and President George W. Bush gave it serious thought.

But if Labrador wants to stop Obama, he should get behind Congressman Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, who has labored toward passing a Boulder-White Clouds wilderness bill crafted by Idahoans.

Labrador's remedy - giving Congress a veto over national monuments - died a decade ago when the GOP controlled the White House and both houses of Congress.

Resurrecting it grabs headlines, but not much else.- M.T.