

Not again

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to the Club for Growth. The last time this group came to Idaho, it spent \$1.1 million electing Bill Sali to the 1st Congressional District in 2006.

Sali was the last thing Idaho needed - a polarizing blowhard - but the Club for Growth didn't care.

Sali went on to fame for such things as proposing to repeal gravity. One thing he would not do, however, is vote against a farm bill. So in 2008, Club for Growth deserted Sali and Democrat Walt Minnick defeated him.

Two years later, Republican Raul Labrador beat Minnick.

Now the Club for Growth is back with plans to elect Idaho Falls lawyer Bryan Smith to the 2nd Congressional District. That would mean ditching eight-term Republican Mike Simpson with someone tied to the GOP's lunatic fringe.

Club for Growth President Chris Chocola labels Simpson a "crazy liberal" and a Republican in Name Only.

Mike Simpson, who famously pulled strings to yank wolves off the endangered species list?

Simpson, who never met an Environmental Protection Agency budget he liked?

Simpson, who has a lifetime American Conservative Union ranking of 84.5 percent?

Simpson, who ranked just slightly behind Labrador on the the National Journal's recent exhaustive index of conservative voting?

Simpson, who ties with House Majority Leader Eric Cantor and comes out ahead of 88 other Republican House members on the Club for Growth's own stilted Scorecard?

That Mike Simpson?

What could explain Chocola's animus for Simpson?

Could it be Simpson's willingness to put the country's good ahead of a narrow political agenda? Simpson admits what everyone knows: If the country is going to regain fiscal sanity, it's going to take both spending cuts and tax increases.

Simpson was a leader in the "Go Big Coalition" of about 100 lawmakers who advocated a compromise fiscal package.

Could it be Simpson's efforts to forge an Idaho consensus on the future of the Boulder-White Cloud range? If Simpson's package of wilderness and economic development doesn't pass, it's likely President Barack Obama will swoop in and declare the place a national monument.

Or it could be that conservative renegades such as Chocola have it in for House Speaker John Boehner? To get to Boehner, they have to go through Simpson.

For Idaho, Chocola's agenda carries a huge price. Simpson is the state's sole voice on the Appropriations Committee, a real asset when you consider how vital federal money is to keeping the state's economy afloat.

But Chocola doesn't care about that. Odds are, he doesn't give much of a hang about Idaho either.

JEERS ... to Washington Senate Majority Leader Rodney Tom, D-Medina. He's come up with a plan to stop the next Legislature from running into overtime - but it's more like poison than medicine.

The Democratic House, the Republican-led Senate and rookie Gov. Jay Inslee deadlocked over taxes, spending and school funding right up until the end of June, when the state's budget was about to go off the fiscal cliff.

To prevent that from happening again, Tom proposes docking lawmakers \$250 a day for every day past the regular 105-day session in odd-numbered years and the 60-day session in even-numbered years. Plus, they'd forfeit the \$90 a day they receive to cover food and lodging.

"We need some pressure to move this process, and right now we don't have this kind of pressure in the system," Tom says.

Washington State Wire's Erik Smith estimates that would have cost lawmakers about \$12,000 out of the \$42,000 they earn.

But there's nothing magical about the time limit. Lawmakers set those deadlines 34 years ago when it became clear the original 60-day, biennial session guideline was no longer practical.

Plus Tom is being too cute here. His pitch works no financial hardship on him. But he would expel just about anyone who isn't independently wealthy or retired from Olympia. So much for a citizen legislature.

CHEERS ... to Washington's 9th Legislative District delegation - Sen. Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville, and Reps. Susan Fagan, R-Pullman, and Joe Schmick, R-Colfax.

Each year, WashingtonVotes.org keeps score on legislative absenteeism.

In 2013, it recorded 694 House floor votes and 619 Senate votes. Fagan was among 53 lawmakers with a perfect record.

Schoesler and Schmick did almost as well. Schoesler missed two votes, Schmick missed four.

Those are among the best showings in a session where 10 lawmakers missed more than 50 votes.

JEERS ... to Asotin County Emergency Services Coordinator Butch Aiken.

To hear him talk at last week's Asotin County Commission meeting, some alien force from the West Side has loaded up flocks of miscreant geese to poop on our dikes and contaminate our swimming areas.

It almost makes you think they're using black helicopters.

Haven't seen or heard the black helicopters?

Come on.

These are black helicopters. They're silent. Why would you hear them?

If you check in with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, here's what you'll find:

They're not doing it. They're not aware of anyone else doing it, either.

In fact, you have to move the federal bureaucracy to do much of anything with these birds. After all, they're protected by the federal Migratory Bird Act.

Of course, they have wings. Maybe they came here on their own.

Aiken also blames the birds for closing Swallows Park to swimming seven years ago.

Not so. Geese aren't the problem. Siltation lowered the river flows, creating unhealthy, stagnant pools at Swallows.- M.T.