

Conservatives want you to rip their MP2

Group of Republican lawmakers visit Lewiston to tout a new empowerment approach to solving America's social problems

William L. Spence/Lewiston Tribune

Some people could confuse MP2 with a type of digital music file, but for one group of Idaho lawmakers it's an old approach to government that shuns the "entitlement mentality" they believe is undermining modern American society.

"What this is really about is changing the political culture of the United States and of Idaho," said state Sen. Steven Thayn, R-Emmett, during a 90-minute panel discussion Tuesday evening at Lewis-Clark State College.

The forum was sponsored by MP2, a newly formed nonprofit corporation that sees strong families and individual empowerment as a more effective approach to solving social problems, compared to simply creating another government program. The name of the organization stands for "Motivating People to be More Productive."

Thayn, Sen. Sheryl Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood, and Sen. Russ Fulcher, R-Meridian, took part in the event. About 15 people attended.

Fulcher, a possible gubernatorial candidate next year, said the idea has somehow come about that creating a new government program is the best and most compassionate way to address the needs of individuals.

Over time, however, such a system becomes a disservice both to the taxpayers who pay for the programs and the program beneficiaries, he said. It discourages the former from working hard, taking risks and creating new businesses, while simultaneously serving as a "narcotic" and disincentive for the latter, making them reluctant to end their dependence.

"That's not compassion," Fulcher said. "True compassion is giving people the tools so they can prosper on their own."

As the drawbacks of this entitlement system become more apparent, MP2 hopes people will be more receptive to alternative approaches that provide incentives for people to help themselves and reduce the cost of government.

"We're not talking about doing away with Medicare or Medicaid," Thayn said. "We're talking about finding ways to empower people so they don't need food stamps or other services."

He and Fulcher both acknowledged that plenty of details need to be ironed out before some MP2 proposals move forward.

In the 2014 Idaho legislative session, however, Fulcher said there will likely be legislation offering an alternative path to the Affordable Care Act. Rather than put the government or a third-party entity in control of an individual's health care choices, he said, the legislation focuses on health savings accounts and other tools that leave consumers in charge of their health care expenditures.

Similarly, he expects legislation to add restrictions or sideboards on the Idaho Common Core education standards, particularly in the area of test standards and data collection.

"We're not necessarily saying don't do (Common Core), but there needs to be some sideboards," Fulcher said.

Regaining control of the federal lands within Idaho is another major focus of MP2, consistent with its philosophy of individual or state self-reliance.

For more information about the group, visit www.mpmpidaho.com.

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