

Kenck: Idaho Democrats' vital signs just fine

Larry Kenck/Lewiston Tribune op-ed

Twenty years of GOP control have left Idaho children with fewer opportunities. Idaho leads the nation in percentage of minimum-wage jobs. We trail the nation for what we invest in our children's education. State cuts to schools have forced rural schools to cut school days and doubled the school districts that run override levies (41 up to 89) to meet basic needs.

The Idaho Democratic Party is dedicated to bringing balance back to Idaho and ending 20 years of failed GOP policies. We work to create a brighter, more prosperous future for Idaho families and small businesses.

In 2014, our candidates will be experienced leaders in business, in their churches, in volunteer organizations. They will be public servants dedicated to putting Idaho families ahead of personal ambition.

As a party, Idaho Democrats are strong and we are getting stronger.

So, Marty Trillhaase writes that we missed an opportunity to jump into the fray regarding Republican Rep. Mark Patterson, who was twice charged with rape - pleading guilty to assault with intent to commit rape in one case, prevailing at trial in the other.

First, kudos to the press for giving Patterson the attention he deserves. Clearly, this Republican leader has a disgusting history. Idahoans now are asking: Why does the Idaho Republican Party support the likes of Rep. Mark Patterson?

Second, we agree with Trillhaase that this man should resign.

Third, we respect the ability of Idahoans to make the right decision. They now have the information they need regarding Rep. Patterson to vote him out.

We disagree with Trillhaase's suggestion that we "should be all over Patterson and his party."

True, Patterson is a reminder of the 2012 resignation of former Republican Sen. John McGee, who "disturbed the peace" with a female staffer in the Senate. Patterson reminds us of Republican Sen. Chuck Winder's suggestion that women don't know if they've been raped or not.

Indeed, Patterson prompts a discussion of other areas of women's issues. We ask again why Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter pays women in his cabinet far less than men. Or we ask again why Republican Sen. Monty Pearce told a qualified woman seeking appointment to the Fish and Game commission to apply for the nursing board instead.

We reject the notion, however, that one party's miscreants should be used to elevate another party's candidates. Our candidates stand apart as excellent people when they are in crowds of excellent people. Idaho Democrats do not have to stand next to Patterson to stand out.

We also know that many of our Republican friends and neighbors feel just as disgusted and betrayed as we do. We are willing to give Republican leaders - who are well-positioned to pressure Patterson to resign - the time they need to come to the right and righteous decision.

As time goes by and Patterson remains in office, it is not the Idaho Democratic Party that has failed Idaho. It will be Republican leaders, failing once again, on a basic question of ethics, integrity and values. They will have failed as they have failed our schools and families and our economy.

Let us be clear. Rep. Mark Patterson should resign. Now, what does the Idaho Republican Party have to say about it?

Kenck is chairman of the Idaho Democratic Party.