

# Channeling Spiro

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to Idaho Republican Sens. Mike Crapo and Jim Risch. To steal a line from former Vice President Spiro Agnew (who himself borrowed it from speechwriter William Safire), they have become "nattering nabobs of negativism" who act like a pair of bricks plopped onto the "no" button.

Case in point: Wednesday's budget vote. Here's a modest compromise - worked out by House Republican Paul Ryan of Wisconsin and Senate Democrat Patty Murray of Washington -to avoid more Washington, D.C., dysfunction while trimming the deficit by \$23 billion during the next decade.

Even a majority of House Republicans - including Idaho's Mike Simpson - went along.

In the Senate, the story was different. Only because a handful of Republicans - among them John McCain of Arizona and Orrin Hatch of Utah - joined Democrats did the deal survive a filibuster attempt. Then the measure passed 64 to 36.

By opposing the deal, Crapo and Risch kept their conservative base happy. But what if their side had prevailed?

House Republicans would never have gone along with a Senate budget that boosted spending by \$91 billion.

Senate Democrats would have blocked any move toward a "clean" continuing resolution locking in the so-called sequester spending cuts.

Translation: Another shutdown - and with it, more economic disruption and closed government offices.

And don't forget, the Republican position - locking in spending at the current levels - means dropping the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program worth about \$1.5 million to Idaho County. It inflicts more pain at the Idaho National Laboratory at Idaho Falls and Mountain Home Air Force Base. And for anyone working in Idaho ranching, logging or mining, it generates more delays in obtaining federal permits.

For Risch, tossing spitballs from the sidelines is just another day at the office.

But from Crapo, you expect more.

Whether it was serving on the Simpson-Bowles Commission or Senate Gang of Eight, Crapo never shirked from facing the harsh reality - any budget deal will require both spending cuts and tax increases.

That was then.

Now he's following Risch's example.

What a disappointment.

CHEERS ... to Dr. William Mannschreck of Lewiston. Since 1981, he's been the professional voice on the Idaho North Central District Board of Health.

Thursday, he closed the books on that tenure.

Idaho's boards of health are staffed by county commissioners and their appointees. But the state wisely requires at least one member of the medical community to serve on health boards.

Look to Mannschreck's service as validation of that law.

He brought science to the board. If it was a matter involving immunizations or the outbreak of illness, Mannschreck provided guidance. In the process, he was a source of credibility among other health care providers and the public at large.

As Mannschreck's successor, Nez Perce County commissioners have appointed Glenn Jefferson, a family practice physician and co-founder of the Snake River Community Clinic.

JEERS ... to Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash. She's becoming the epitome of the GOP's knee jerk response to any issue:

Cold weather?

Blame Obamacare.

The price of gas?

It's got to be Obamacare's fault.

The common cold?

Check Obamacare's fine print.

In fact, McMorris Rodgers couldn't wait to take Garfield resident Debbie Brown's story national. Brown approached

McMorris Rodgers with a problem: The carrier who provided her supplemental Medicare coverage was pulling out of Whitman County. Brown wanted to know if Obamacare was the reason.

McMorris Rodgers declared Brown was yet another American who had been "hurt by this law" and "recently lost her health insurance because of Obamacare,"

Unfortunately for the Washington Republican, the Moscow-Pullman Daily News' Bill McKee went fact-checking. He found the private insurance market - not Obamacare - created Brown's predicament.

"What's happened is Asuris Northwest Health, a Regence BlueShield company, has pulled out of the Medicare Advantage market in Whitman County," HUB International insurance agent Ryan Focht told McKee. "I don't think you can attribute that to health care reform."

What does McMorris Rodgers have to say about this?

No comment.

CHEERS ... to Idaho Sen. Fred Martin, R-Boise. Until Martin intervened, the Idaho GOP's response to state Rep. Mark Patterson, R-Boise, was a study in somnambulation.

A first-termer, Patterson got elected last year before anyone found out about his criminal record, which got exposed after Ada County Sheriff Gary Raney denied his application for a concealed weapons permit.

Turns out Patterson was charged with rape - twice. In 1974, he pleaded guilty to a reduced charge in Tampa, Fla., took a withheld judgment and completed a probation. Three years later, he was acquitted in an Ohio trial.

Things went from bad to worse when Patterson blamed everyone else - the victim, the cops, Raney - for his problems. Outside his small circle of defenders - including Idaho Freedom Foundation President Wayne Hoffman and Rep. Judy Boyle, R-Midvale - there was talk of Patterson's abusive demeanor and language.

But nobody acted until Martin spoke up and called for Patterson to step down. Then he spearheaded the legislative district central committee's demand for Patterson's ouster.

That takes some nerve. Martin is stirring up dust among his own constituency.

After initially going so far as to say, "Nobody can give me a reason to resign," Patterson yielded and announced he would step down. - M.T.