

Bad ideas should not necessitate recall election

Devin Rokyta/Moscow-Pullman Daily News editorial board

Recall elections are becoming more and more a part of American "democracy."

Instead of graciously accepting defeat and the public's will, losing political parties and other politically motivated organizations are increasingly using the tactic to hinder and stall their opposition rather than waiting for the victor's term to expire, as the norm.

Clearly there are instances when recall drives are warranted, like when U.S. senators frequent Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport bathrooms or when an elected official fondles a little boy or snorts cocaine off the toilet seat. Such people clearly aren't fit for public office, however, in most cases the tactic is simply another political ploy that in the end only hurts the democratic process.

We feel that's what is taking place in Sandpoint, where a recall drive has been approved against Steve Youngdahl, head of the Lake Pend Oreille School District board. In the fall, Youngdahl, who said he was concerned that five of the district's 11 schools are in rural areas where the response time by law enforcement can be up to 20 minutes, proposed placing guns in secure locations inside schools and training some teachers, administrators and other employees to use them in case of a school shooting. The guns would use a fingerprint locking system that would restrict their use to those authorized to handle them, he said.

County clerk employees confirmed last week that 107 signatures were collected within the school district, more than enough to force a new election.

Youngdahl, though, is standing by the proposal and his performance, saying, "I can assure you that I'm not going to resign."

We vehemently disagree with Youngdahl's proposal of arming teachers and believe it would only endanger students and staff, but his action doesn't indicate he is unfit to fulfill his term or that it warrants immediate removal from office.

While we don't agree with the recall drive, we hope some positive can come from it, especially with the state Legislature set to convene in Boise on Monday. The outrage demonstrated up north, in a largely conservative region, may just encourage some of Idaho's more radical politicians to leave similar - and even more extreme - ideas at home.