

Huckleberries interviews Steve Bruno, temporary acting chairman of the Kootenai County Democratic Party – 3.20.14

Huckleberries: Was Larry Spencer's attempt to take over the local Democratic Party a complete surprise?

Steve Bruno: It caught us off guard.

Huckleberries: What are you going to do about preserving your Central Committee for true Democrats?

Bruno: I see this as a cynical move. Basically, the Republican Party is pretty fractured -- and there are people in that party that are frustrated with the dominance of a radical element in their own party, as many Democrats are. Most people are basically moderate. This is an effort by Larry Spencer to co-opt the other party's central committee in order to supplant its core principles in order to get elected. In our view, the radical element of the Republican Party has made it hard for reasonable Republicans to get elected. So, instead of making the obvious choice, to vote for reasonable moderate Democrats in general elections, they've typically chosen to vote a straight party ticket thus sustaining their own radical group in the Legislature.

Huckleberries: How do you block Spencer from taking over?

Bruno: We have to run write-in candidates and promote those candidates to people in the community who understand what's going on. Spencer's core principles are not central Democratic principles. This is a pretense. He's trying to use the Democratic mantle to get elected for his own ideology. Nonetheless this does operate as a clarion call for Democrats in Kootenai County to defend core principles.

The Democratic Party has no interest in interfering with the process that Republicans use to pick candidates. We have no interest in manipulating the Republican Central Committee. What Larry's doing is dishonest. How do we know that? Many a truth is told in jest. His jest about agreeing with a Democratic Platform of 1892 is a telltale for the drift going on in the Republican Party in Idaho -- a drift to go backward in time to an imagined better world where the gun and a philosophy of every man for himself were considered by some to be the great equalizers. The Democratic Party understands and promotes the idea that education and equal rights are the great equalizers of history.

Huckleberries: Is Spencer's takeover attempt a good thing?

Bruno: This does operate as a clarion call for Democrats in this community. It forces us to recognize that if you don't stand up for your core principles that you risk losing those principles in your society.

Huckleberries: How will you deal with the strong possibility that Spencer will represent the Democratic Party in the general election for county assessor?

Bruno: We try to vote for the person we perceive to be the best candidate for the job. There's strong sentiment out there that Larry isn't the best for the job, no matter what mantle he tries to adopt. Our job is to define, from the Central Committee's point of view, whether Larry Spencer's core values align with the core values of the Democratic Party. It's likely that we're going to have a write-in candidate. If he wins, he'll likely go forward without support of the Central Committee. It's up to us to get the call out to Democrats that core principles are under attack.