

Of closets and cows

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to former Sen. Nicole LeFavour, D-Boise. Whatever gave her the idea to hide in a private Senate lounge closet for five or six hours Tuesday until an assistant sergeant at arms caught her?

LeFavour, Idaho's first openly gay lawmaker, wants legislators to add the words "sexual orientation and gender identity" to Idaho's human rights act, making it illegal to discriminate on the job, in housing and public accommodations.

For eight years, legislators have refused to even consider enacting the change - making them the perfect foil for LeFavour and others who used themselves as human barricades outside legislative chambers and Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter's offices.

Willing to subject themselves to arrest and sanctions, LeFavour and her fellow protesters held the high moral ground against forces for intransigence and intolerance - whose only defense was to accuse LeFavour of alienating Republicans and subsequently hurting her own cause.

How do you hurt a cause the political establishment refuses to even consider?

We're about to find out.

Had LeFavour wanted to engage in political metaphor, why didn't she alert everyone of her plans to enter a closet and remain there until forcibly removed?

Instead, she crept in and hid until she was found out.

That's not civil disobedience.

That's simply weird.

JEERS ... to state Sen. Jim Rice, R-Caldwell. When Mercy for Animals activists filmed workers at a Magic Valley dairy beating, stomping and sexually abusing dairy cows, Rice was peeved.

At the activists.

With the agribusiness lobby in his corner, Rice passed Idaho's "ag-gag" bill, subjecting anyone who videotapes, records or takes pictures "of an agricultural production facility's operations" to a year in jail, \$5,000 fines and large restitution payments.

With the public outraged and the law itself facing a constitutional challenge, Rice doubled down, accusing Mercy for Animals of staging the whole thing.

"The guy who was filming was telling (the dairy workers) what he wanted to film and then they were doing what he wanted, not what was normally the course of behavior at the dairy," Rice told a Boise talk radio program.

How come we never heard this before?

CHEERS ... to Sens. Dan Johnson, R-Lewiston, and Sheryl Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood. They were among a handful of lawmakers - six in the Senate and five in the House - who voted against Commerce Director Jeff Sayer's plan to cut a company's income, sales and payroll taxes up to 30 percent for creating 20 average-paying jobs in a rural area and 50 average-paying jobs in an urban setting.

This measure leaves a lot of discretion in the hands of Sayer and a seven-member Economic Advisory Council about who gets this fundable tax credit and who does not.

It also continues along a path of failure - relying on tax giveaways to pick winners and losers when the key to economic growth is skilled workers, good schools and quality infrastructure - all of which suffer when the state treasury is depleted.

JEERS ... to state Reps. Cindy Agidius, R-Moscow, and Thyra Stevenson, R-Lewiston. Although each represents a community that has taxed itself to the hilt to compensate for inadequate state support for public schools, Agidius and Stevenson supported Sen. Bob Nonini's plan to siphon \$10 million from public schools for private academies.

Even if the Great Nonini's plan encourages 3,300 students to enroll in a private school, the cost of educating Idaho's remaining 285,000 public schools students does not change.

Have Agidius and Stevenson not considered their constitutional obligation to "establish and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public, free common schools"?

Have they not contemplated the constitutional admonition against allocating public dollars " ... to help support or sustain any school, academy, seminary, college, university or other literary or scientific institution, controlled by any church, sectarian or religious denomination whatsoever. ..."?

Have they even read the Idaho Constitution?

JEERS ... to Sen. Russ Fulcher, R-Merdian. To overcome a political error, he's willing to put your safety at risk.

Last week, Fulcher killed a measure that would have ended the right of Idaho's 3,000 elected officials to carry concealed weapons without getting a permit - like everyone else.

The issue came to light when former Rep. Mark Patterson's criminal background - a withheld judgment in a 1974 Florida rape case and an acquittal in a 1977 Ohio rape case - blocked him

from getting a permit. As a legislator, however, Patterson, R-Boise, was allowed to carry a concealed weapon anyway, until he resigned under pressure.

Fulcher said that was a privilege he was unwilling to relinquish - an odd thing to say considering the Meridian Republican is Otter's populist challenger in the GOP primary.

So what was Fulcher's next maneuver? Argue everyone should have the same right "to carry concealed (weapons) without regulation from the government - both elected officials and citizens."

Who would that help?

JEERS ... to Idaho attorney general hopeful Chris Troupis. Last week, the politician formerly known as Christ Troupis claimed the support of Idaho billionaire Frank VanderSloot - who helped get Attorney General Lawrence Wasden elected in 2002 - and VanderSloot's corporate spokesman, Damond Watkins of Idaho Falls, who is also the Idaho GOP national committeeman.

But neither VanderSloot nor Watkins are supporting Troupis.

When the Idaho Statesman's Dan Popkey caught up with him, Troupis said he was confused.

Either that or he's lying. - M.T.