

# Otter, Labrador poke a stick at the women's vote

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

It's not hard to read the political calculation behind the high-fives Idaho Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter and Congressman Raul Labrador extended to the U.S. Supreme Court Monday.

The court had struck down the part of Obamacare that obligated employers - such as the owners of the Hobby Lobby chain - to extend health insurance coverage toward contraceptives in violation of their religious conscience.

Here was an opportunity for Otter and Labrador to appeal to that core of people who believe - in spite of all scientific evidence to the contrary - that oral contraceptives and intrauterine devices are abortifacients.

Here was another opening to argue against government mandates.

And above all else, here was one more way to tag Idaho Democrats with the Obamacare issue.

Said Otter: "Today's ruling confirms once again that President Obama's policies - when left unchecked - are eroding our constitutional rights. I remain committed to challenging that misguided course at every opportunity, and I'm grateful to courageous individuals and employers willing to stand up and be counted."

Said Labrador: "No American should be forced to choose between following their faith and submitting to unlawful and unnecessary government mandates. The (Health and Human Services) mandate, by violating freedom of conscience, needed to be overturned and repudiated. The Supreme Court's decision breathes new life into one of our most important freedoms and eliminates one of the most destructive aspects of Obamacare."

They're following conventional wisdom. But what if they're wrong?

What if Idaho women - Republicans among them - don't see this their way?

For the sake of argument, suppose they ask some questions.

Such as:

- If this is a matter of showing respect for religious freedom, why aren't Christian Scientists - who reject Western medical science in lieu of prayer - exempted from purchasing any health insurance for their employees?
- Likewise, why does the law continue to require Jehovah's Witnesses to purchase insurance that would pay for blood transfusions their employees might need?
- Where's the exemption that would spare Jewish businesses from paying for insulin that contains pork products?

- If business owners object to vaccines, why is there no provision allowing them to withhold coverage for the immunization of the employees?
- If it's simply a matter of religious conscience, where's the concern about insurance coverage for Viagra and other erectile dysfunction treatments? Why isn't anyone discussing vasectomies? What about testosterone supplements?
- Why is it only a provision of the law that makes contraception - and the health examinations required to get a prescription - affordable to many women that becomes fair game for the Supreme Court and Republican politicians?

It doesn't happen very often, but when Idaho women get riled, the GOP loses elections.

In 1990, women didn't like the way Idaho's Republican-led Legislature linked up with a radical anti-abortion rights agenda and passed what would have been the toughest abortion ban in the nation. The result was a shellacking that delivered half the congressional delegation, half the state Senate and the top state offices to the Democratic Party.

Two years ago, state Sen. Chuck Winder, R-Boise, thought it would be a wonderful idea to force Idaho women to undergo an invasive vaginal ultrasound - in other words, state-sponsored rape - before they would be permitted to get an abortion. National notoriety and Statehouse vigils later, even the conservative Idaho House walked away from Winder.

And while it had little to do with reproductive rights, the defeat of state schools Superintendent Tom Luna's overhaul package later that year certainly reflected Republican women standing with their children's teachers rather than following the party line.

All of which does not tell you why Otter and Labrador would be so eager to cheer the Hobby Lobby decision.

But it might explain why you've heard next to nothing about this from Congressman Mike Simpson and Sens. Jim Risch and Mike Crapo. - M.T.