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Partisanship Before Citizenship, By Nels Mitchel

It is fascinating to watch my opponent, Sen. Jim Risch, attempt to airbrush his record, or as some have observed, mislead voters about his record on the Idaho National Laboratory, one of Idaho's largest employers.

Last January, Risch voted against funding the INL when he voted against the budget bill. And, a few months before that, he was one of the Senators that shut down the government for 16 days. A move that resulted in INL furloughs and which ultimately cost taxpayers more than \$24 Billion.

No one in Idaho can question the importance of the INL. Its workforce has more than 6000 government and contractor workers. A BSU study found that the INL creates more than 24,000 Idaho jobs.

The secondary benefits have a huge impact on Idaho. INL workers live in Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Blackfoot, Rexburg, Mud Lake, Hamer, and countless other Southeastern Idaho towns. INL workers spend their money and invest in those same communities. The BSU study found that the INL generates \$3.5 Billion for Idaho's economy.

One of my brothers worked at the INL as did one of my nephews. I understand the importance of those INL jobs to Idaho families and local businesses in Southeastern Idaho. I also understand the important role that the INL performs in nuclear energy, homeland security and national defense for our country.

What I do not understand is how Risch could vote against those INL jobs. How he could vote against those Idaho families and communities that are supported by the INL.

Nevertheless, Risch continues to campaign around Idaho and pretend that he is a friend of the INL. For example, after his “no” vote on funding, Risch said in a tweet: “Idaho Falls civil [sic] leaders in today-great discussion on @INL issues. We are all pulling the wagon together and making progress—more to do.”

It’s no thanks to Jim Risch that INL even *has* money this year. He can say what he likes now, but the fact is that he voted against funding for the INL— the INL budget that Rep. Mike Simpson supported. He can pretend to be looking out for INL on Twitter or as he struts around the State, but it’s his votes in the Senate that matter, and he voted against the interests of Idaho and thousands of Idahoans who work at the site and thousands more who depend on the site as a bulwark of the southeastern Idaho economy. This is just another example of Sen. Risch saying one thing in Idaho but doing something else in Washington.

Idaho needs a US Senator that will be an advocate for the INL and important role that it plays, not only for Idaho, but for the country as well. Idaho also needs a US Senator who will do the same thing in Washington as he says he will when he is home in Idaho.

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