

Bujak would bite the hand that feeds Idaho

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

Delaware is a rich state.

So are New Jersey, Massachusetts and California.

People there pay for their own schools, highways and people - and they pay some more.

Half of Delaware's federal taxes never return home.

New Jersey leaves behind about \$1 of every \$8 in federal taxes it pays.

People in California and Massachusetts forfeit about \$1 of every \$16 in federal taxes they pay.

And where does that money go?

To keep struggling states from falling into Third World status.

States such as Idaho - which gets \$1.40 back for every \$1 in federal taxes its people pay.

John Bujak thinks that should stop.

Canyon County's former prosecutor, Bujak is the Libertarian Party's candidate for Idaho governor.

He says Republican Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter has gone liberal, in part because he's been too willing to take federal money.

"We're bowing down to the demands of the federal government," he told Kimberlee Kruesi of The Associated Press.

"Idaho has become too dependent on federal dollars," Bujak told David Cole of the Coeur d'Alene Press.

What would Idaho look like under Gov. Bujak?

A lot poorer, to start with.

Idaho's per capita income is second lowest only to Mississippi. Its average weekly wages trail only Puerto Rico. Only Tennessee has more of its people living on minimum wage.

It needs every dollar it can wring out of food stamps, Medicaid and welfare.

Without federal subsidies, it can't pay for highways and bridges. For every \$1 Idahoans pay in federal transportation taxes, they get \$1.70 back.

Say goodbye to about 10,000 middle-class federal jobs.

The same goes for the Farm Bill that keeps legislators such as Reps. Tom Loertscher, R-Iona, and Mike Moyle, R-Star, afloat.

Also gone would be the \$26.3 million Payment in Lieu of Taxes that funnels \$1.52 million to Idaho County alone.

Then there's the \$2.4 billion in government contracts - the ninth highest per capita in the country - that support everything from the Idaho National Laboratory to university research programs.

Plus \$1.15 billion in small business loans that funnel through Idaho's economy.

All of that would disappear.

You could expect the forests and range lands to burn up. The feds spend anywhere from \$392 million to \$500 million a year managing their lands in Idaho. Much of that is spent on an infrastructure that extinguishes 98 percent of fires before they spread.

If you think Idaho is too miserly with its state programs - everything from the most underfunded school system in the United States to higher education tuition extending beyond the reach of Idaho families - where would it be without the federal government propping up a third of its budget?

Into this dystopian vision would be the inevitable need to raise state taxes upon the middle class, even though there would be fewer of them around by the time Bujak would be running for a second term in 2018.

All of which would be just fine with the voters of Delaware, New Jersey, Massachusetts and California. They would get to spend more of their money on their own people, their schools and their highways.

Perhaps Bujak might consider running for governor there. - M.T.