

# J. Edgar Denney

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to state Rep. Lawrence (Boss) Denney, R-Midvale. The Republican nominee for secretary of state - Idaho's chief election officer - thinks it would be a swell idea to subject voters to fingerprinting.

"One of my priorities is to work on measures to enhance the security of the election process, such as new technology that scans either signatures or fingerprints," Denney wrote in Sunday's Idaho Statesman. "There is a cost for increased security, and I hope to work with the Legislature to start the appropriate process for implementation as soon as possible. During my campaign, I have emphasized the importance of ensuring the security of the ballot, and the integrity of the process."

What's next?

Peeing into a cup?

Passing a breath test?

Drawing blood?

Swabbing your cheek for DNA?

Paying a poll tax?

Is Denney blind to the extensive steps Idaho already takes to counter voter fraud?

To register, a voter submits either part of his Social Security number or his state-issued driver's license to verification through the Social Security Administration or the Idaho Transportation Department. His signature is scanned and is available to check against an absentee ballot application. And, of course, he can't vote on Election Day without submitting identification at the polls.

Or is Denney - who sponsored the law chasing away independent voters from the closed Republican primary - out to disenfranchise more people who can't be counted on to agree with him?

At the beckoning of groups such as the American Legislative Exchange Council, Republicans in 19 states suppressed independent voters. Idaho's current secretary of state, Ben Ysursa, has refused to join that movement.

If anything would give people second thoughts about voting, it would be the threat of rolling their digits across an inked pad.

Talk about Big Brother. Idahoans would be incensed if anyone forced them to get fingerprinted to buy a gun, let alone cast a ballot.

And once he has the fingerprints of 660,000 Idaho voters on file, who does J. Edgar (Boss) Denney plan to share them with?

JEERS ... to Washington Lt. Gov. Brad Owen. Since 1997, Owen has held his current \$97,000-a-year job but he displays an astonishing disregard for the line separating his public duties from his private gain.

From 1989 until 2012, Owen operated his own nonprofit - Strategies for Youth. Through it, he employed his wife, Linda, and obtained a red Dodge pickup truck for his personal use.

When Strategies for Youth ran into financial difficulty, Owen used his public office to subsidize it by hiring the nonprofit's staff musician, Brett Peterson, as an administrative assistant at a salary of \$3,007 a month. He also asked state lobbyists to contribute to his nonprofit.

The Executive Ethics Board fined him \$15,000 - and spared him another \$5,000 providing he behaves himself the next two years. Owen, the ethics board said, is a "high-ranking elected official and these types of allegations significantly reduce the public respect and confidence in state government employees."

This isn't Owen's first brush with trouble. In 1998, he was hit with a \$7,000 fine for using his office inappropriately to oppose Initiative 685, which sought to decriminalize marijuana.

As the Olympian observed last week, Owen "doesn't sound like a man willing to learn from his mistakes."

JEERS ... to Dan Hally. The candidate for Asotin County sheriff misled the voters Sunday when his campaign committee advertised a debate with his opponent, John Hilderbrand, for Oct. 1 at the Walla Walla Community College auditorium.

Hilderbrand has refused to debate and Hally knows it. It's hardly commendable that Hilderbrand, who carried 57 percent of the primary vote against Hally, apparently has decided to sit on his lead. Why is he unwilling to stand up and defend himself without handlers and paid advertising to back him up?

But Hally's ploy was a set-up.

If Hilderbrand appeared, he was walking into a loaded debate. Hilderbrand could not know if Hally, for instance, would get all the softball questions while he got pilloried.

And if Hilderbrand took a pass, Hally had a ready-made campaign rally.

Not only does departing from the truth cast aspersions on Hally's moral compass, but you have to wonder about his judgment. By choosing to manipulate rather than trust the voters, he just forfeited the right to challenge his opponent to any further debates.

JEERS ... to Clarkston City Councilors Larry

Baumberger, Brian Kolstad and George Nash. Nobody drafted them to join the city council. But once elected, they have an obligation to vote "aye" or "nay" - and to take the heat.

Monday, these three abstained - refusing to say either way on whether to notify two firefighters they might be laid off. Federal Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Responder (SAFER) grants run out at the end of the year and the city apparently can't absorb the loss.

It's one thing to abstain from voting when a councilor has a conflict of interest. To hide behind an abstention in this case, however, was a dereliction of duty - leaving the choice to Councilors Terry Beadles, Bill Provost and Clee Manchester, who voted yes, while Councilor Kelly Blackmon cast the one dissenting vote.

CHEERS ... to Candace Martinez of Lewiston. As Lewiston's city council evolves toward prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, they have been confronted with one challenge: Prove the ordinance is necessary to solve a problem.

Monday, Martinez gave an eyewitness account of the discrimination she encountered since moving to Lewiston.

"I knew I was gay the moment I looked at another woman," she said.

That took courage.

Alone among the people in that room, Martinez walked away knowing that unless the council acts, it will be legal under Idaho law for people to deny her work, housing or access to public accommodations simply because of what she said. - M.T.