

# Vanilla, anyone?

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to Idaho Republican Party Chairman Steve Yates. He says it's no big deal that his candidate for Idaho state schools superintendent, Sherri Ybarra, got caught plagiarizing.

An entire section from Democratic candidate Jana Jones' website - word for word and with identical punctuation - wound up on Ybarra's webpage. And there it remained for months until Idaho Education News' Clark Corbin exposed it.

"This is plain, vanilla prose," Yates told Kimberlee Kruesi of The Associated Press. Ybarra didn't steal Jones' policies, just her introductory statement. Jones seems to be seeking "an expansive accusation of plagiarism."

Is the leader of the Republican Party telling Idaho's school children that plagiarism is OK as long as it's the "vanilla prose" variety? Would he be equally forgiving to Democrats?

CHEERS ... to Clarkston City Councilor George Nash. He goofed and he admitted it.

Last month, Nash joined Councilors Terry Beadles, Kelly Blackmon and Bill Provost in the misguided notion that they could block legalized pot stores simply by defeating a proposed zoning ordinance.

Nobody in the room - including City Attorney Jim Grow - seemed cognizant of the fact that they had things backwards. The zoning ordinance would limit pot retailers to two blocks downtown and part of Bridge Street. Kill it and you leave the entire commercial sector open to pot stores.

Oops. So Nash reversed himself.

"I'm not voting on marijuana," he said. "I'm voting on zoning."

Beadles, Blackmon and Provost still voted no. But Nash, along with Councilors Brian Kolstad, Larry Baumberger and Clee Manchester, moved to reintroduce the ordinance. It could come up for a final vote next month - just before the city's moratorium on legal pot sales expires.

CHEERS ... to Idaho Treasurer Ron Crane. For the first time since voters elected him to his current job 16 years ago, Crane has agreed to debate an opponent on statewide television.

Crane will join his Democratic rival, Deborah Silver of Twin Falls, on Idaho Public Television's "Idaho Debates" Oct. 9.

As the Republican incumbent, Crane has enormous advantages over Silver - who is having trouble raising money and drawing attention.

But in a debate forum, she could land a punch or two. A certified public accountant, Silver has the expertise to delve into problems legislative auditors have unearthed within Crane's office. Among them was his decision to pay face value for downgraded mortgage-backed securities, thereby costing a pool of money he managed for the state at least \$10.2 million and possibly another \$17.4 million. Auditors also found Crane apparently lived it up while traveling on the state's dime in New York City, billed the taxpayers for the \$8,000 worth of gas he pumped into his personal vehicle and spent \$10,000 on a "Smart Women, Smart Money Conference" involving a nonprofit he created.

So give Crane points. Under the circumstances, he's showing courage under fire.

JEERS ... to U.S. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho. Alone among all Idaho Republicans, he has snubbed the "Idaho Debates."

Everyone from Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter to Congressmen Raul Labrador and Mike Simpson, from Lawrence (Boss) Denney, the GOP's nominee for secretary of state. and Lt. Gov. Brad Little, to Sherri Ybarra, the Republican running for state schools chief, has the courage to get on statewide television.

But Risch has slinked away. He's chosen Boise's KTVB to stand off with Democratic challenger Nels Mitchell.

That's fine for Boise, but what about the voters in northern, central and eastern Idaho? Does Risch expect KTVB to be friendlier to him? And where is it written that a candidate for statewide office gets away with limiting himself to just one debate? Otter, for instance, has agreed to four debates, including both the KTVB and public television forums.

Do you get the feeling Risch does not want to explain:

- How, as governor in 2006, he passed a tax change that helped the rich and impoverished the public schools?
- Why he killed Simpson's Boulder-White Clouds wilderness plan?
- Why an independent watchdog group says he's among the least productive members of the Senate?

CHEERS ... to Mayor Jim Kleeburg and the four councilors who Monday placed Lewiston on the path toward justice for all.

Formal passage of Lewiston's anti-discrimination ordinance is a few weeks off. But Monday, the measure cleared its first reading by a 5-2 vote.

Once passed, the measure would protect people against discrimination on the job, in housing and in public accommodations on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and familial status.

Lewiston would become the ninth

Idaho city to take this step - joining Boise, Moscow, Coeur d'Alene, Sandpoint, Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Ketchum and Victor.

State lawmakers have refused to protect gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people from discrimination.

CHEERS ... to Nez Perce County Prosecutor Dan Spickler. Less than a week after his May 13 stroke, he returned to work - doing so against his doctors' advice. Talk about devotion to duty.

Spickler told the Tribune's Joel Mills he had to deal with budgets, vacancies and the county's lawsuit with Lewiston over urban renewal.

"Your brain is supposed to take some rest just to regenerate, and I couldn't just get the time to do it because we had a lot of personnel matters," Spickler said.

Just the same, he's a prosecutor, not the president. If he requires medical leave, the people of Nez Perce County should be good enough to provide it.

Spickler's doctors are telling him to go home and recover. He ought to listen. - M.T.