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**My Debate with Senator Risch
By Nels Mitchell**

At the KTVB U.S. Senate Debate, Mr. Risch did not want to be outdone by Governor Otter, who brought ridicule to Idaho by insisting on including a cast of characters in the GOP primary debate. Mr. Risch, however, did not need a supporting cast. He created a sideshow all by himself.

During the debate taping, I did my best to focus on the issues that matter to the people of Idaho, and ignore Mr. Risch's strange behavior -- his refusal to shake hands before the debate and his unwillingness to look me in the eye. Risch, however, dodged the issues and engaged in theatrics. But most disturbing, he told lies and half-truths.

Risch claimed that the national debt and the national deficit are the biggest problem facing Idaho. Risch and his bogeyman were exposed and ridiculed by Rachel Maddow on her national news program yesterday--the current deficit is the smallest since 2008, and less than the 40 year average. The biggest problem facing Idaho is the lack of living wage jobs and our weak economy. Since 2001, Idaho has lost more than 18,000 jobs to China. Yet, Risch opposed eliminating the tax breaks to companies that send American jobs overseas.

Senator Risch claimed that he broke his promise to support Congressman Mike Simpson's CIEDRA proposal for protecting the Boulder White Clouds because some anonymous "liberals" changed the proposal. And, even if one were to believe that there was any truth to his charge, Risch has had six years in Washington. All he needed to do was pick up the phone and ask Rep. Simpson to remove whatever feature the anonymous "liberals" had added to the proposal.

In attempting to defend his vote against the Violence Against Women Act (which Senator Mike Crapo co-sponsored), Risch stated that domestic violence is an issue for the states, not the federal government. That is absurd. Both the state and federal governments have important

roles to play in addressing this serious issue. Risch displayed his true colors when he voted against Senator Franken's amendment to a defense appropriations bill that would have given a rape victim working for Halliburton (or any other American defense contractor) an opportunity to prove her case in an American court. As Jon Stewart observed, "how is anyone against this...If to protect Halliburton you have to side against rape victims, you might want to rethink your allegiances." Halliburton has contributed \$10,000 to Risch's re-election.

Throughout the debate, Risch resorted to tired labels and false accusations -- wrongly labelling me a "liberal" and accusing me of having California values. I was raised in Idaho, graduated from Boise High and the University of Idaho Law School. I am a proud Idahoan. In the U.S. Senate, I will reflect and promote Idaho values of honesty, responsibility, and hard work. And I will work with Democrats, Republicans and Independents to find common ground and move our country forward.

Unlike Mr. Risch, I will avoid the kind of shrill insults and vilification which he displayed at the debate. To continue in that vein is a prescription for more gridlock and dysfunction. It's time we move beyond the failed politics of the past, retire career politicians, and let some fresh air into the U.S. Senate.

After seeing Mr. Risch at our debate, I now understand why he has refused all of the other debate and candidate forum invitations. He is afraid to defend his record.

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