

# On Election Day, winning isn't everything

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

Neither U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, nor outgoing state schools Superintendent Tom Luna got a single vote Nov. 4. But they were big winners.

With his party now in control of the Senate, Crapo is poised to wield seniority on the banking, budget and finance committees.

"These committees place him at the very vortex of an issue he rightly feels is still to be addressed - controlling the nation's profligate spending and laying out a path to reduce the debt and eventually put the country back on a pay-as-you-go basis," notes columnist Chris Carlson.

The drubbing Luna's school overhaul package took in the 2012 election made him so politically toxic he chose not to seek re-election and instead will go to work for a nonprofit.

But as political scientist Jim Weatherby observed on the Nov. 7 broadcast of "Idaho Reports," the election of Republican Sherri Ybarra as his successor means Democrat Jana Jones will not be able to scrutinize how Luna managed the state education department for the last eight years.

And given Ybarra's endless string of gaffes - including failing to vote in most elections, plagiarizing Jones' website, misrepresenting her marital history and education credentials - it's a good bet that she will make Luna look better by comparison.

Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho, won a third term from the 1st Congressional District. But the outcome leaves his career advancement options momentarily checked.

A run for governor was made more difficult. Not only did Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter clinch a third four-year term, but his presumed successor, Lt. Gov. Brad Little, burnished his credentials with solid returns in both the GOP primary and general election.

Nor will there be an opening in the U.S. Senate. With the GOP taking control of that chamber, Crapo has every reason to run for re-election in two years.

Labrador's Tea Party wing of the Republican Party lost round after round to the establishment - including in Idaho's 2nd District where Congressman Mike Simpson dispatched Club for Growth-backed challenger Bryan Smith of Idaho Falls in the May GOP primary.

As part of the majority, Crapo and Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, will be under pressure to vote more like Simpson - leaving Labrador the choice of remaining with his Tea Party allies and being the odd man out within the Idaho delegation.

The GOP retained four of every five seats in the Idaho Legislature. But for the second consecutive election, voters turned thumbs down on its agenda. This year's version was House

Joint Resolution 2 under which lawmakers unanimously asked voters to amend the state constitution and to enshrine their authority to veto rules and regulations drafted by state agencies. It was a pre-emptive run against the other two branches of government and voters rejected it by fewer than 5,000 votes.

Just two years ago, Idahoans overwhelmingly repealed the 2011 Luna Laws.

- Winner: Idaho Republican Party Chairman Steve Yates. Appointed to run the GOP in August - after the convention gridlocked in Moscow and a lawsuit deposed Chairman Barry Peterson - Yates at least papered over the schisms within the party long enough to produce a victory lap from the top of the ticket on down.
- Loser: Idaho Education Association. After scoring big two years ago by repealing the Luna laws, teachers watched helplessly as Otter won re-election promising to revise the package in a different wrapper. Ybarra's win leaves the state school management in Republican hands. And the legislative atmosphere remains problematic.
- Winner: Attorney General Lawrence Wasden. His re-election coincides with a vindication. Unlike Otter, who continued to flail away at the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals' decision overturning Idaho's same-sex marriage ban, Wasden waited to put the issue before the U.S. Supreme Court. His chance came Thursday when the 6th Circuit upheld the ability of states to define marriage.
- Losers: Idaho's editorial pages. They agreed on one point. Ybarra had no business becoming the state schools superintendent. She beat Jones by 5,667 votes statewide. - M.T.