

Not again

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho. One of the architects of last year's government shutdown, Labrador is heading in the same direction again.

Labrador opposes President Obama's executive order blocking the deportation of 5 million undocumented residents. As political leverage against that policy, he wants to use next week's deadline when the federal government will run out of money.

GOP leadership is on track to pass 11 of the 12 appropriations bills, which would keep the government open for business through Sept. 30. It would fund Homeland Security - which covers immigration - temporarily and wait for the newly elected Republican Senate majority to take office next month.

Labrador calls that "capitulation." He's not using the word "shutdown." But holding the budget hostage invites just that.

"We had a shutdown a year ago, and we just got the biggest majority we've ever had in the House since 1928, and one of the largest majorities we've ever had in the Senate," he told Roll Call. "So I don't understand their reasoning for taking anything off the table."

What about the rest of us?

Taxpayers got the \$23 billion bill.

Economic forecaster Joel Prakken told the New York Times these political maneuvers sliced growth by 1 percent - something a sputtering economy cannot afford.

JEERS ... to Sandpoint attorney Tevis Hull. One of five would-be successors to 2nd District Court Judge Michael J. Griffin, Hull introduced himself Tuesday to the Idaho Judicial Council at Grangeville as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Let that sink in for a minute.

A fellow who would be empowered to decide who goes to prison and who does not thinks being a Mormon makes him a better judge.

Or at least he believes telling people he's a Mormon will give his application an edge over non-Mormon candidates.

Perhaps he's confused. This is Grangeville, not Rexburg.

In any event, Hull - who did not make the list of finalists - just put a huge asterisk next to his name.

Here's a man with a fundamental misunderstanding if not contempt for the constitutional separation of church and state. He's telling people who are not Mormons or even religious that if he's ever placed on the bench, they may not get a fair hearing.

CHEERS ... to former state Rep. Thyra Stevenson, R-Lewiston. Last week's recount of her loss to Rep. Dan Rudolph, D-Lewiston, could not have been pleasant. Throughout the process, Stevenson was cordial.

Given the tight 26-vote margin, Stevenson had every right to request a recount.

But it meant putting up another \$3,300 and enduring - in public - nearly five hours of bad news.

First came a check of 600 ballots.

Separate counts by hand and then by machine matched exactly.

Next came the examination of 54 duplicated ballots. In each case, voters had not followed instructions, but their intent had been unambiguous.

Finally came the entire recount, which produced merely one more vote for Stevenson. A voter had made marks next to each candidate's name, but a closer inspection proved the individual intended to support the Republican.

Final margin: Rudolph won by 25 votes.

"That is insufficient to overturn the results of the election," declared Deputy Attorney General Michael Gilmore.

"Oh, you killjoy you," joked Stevenson.

CHEERS ... to Asotin County Prosecutor Ben

Nichols. As the Tribune's Kathy Hedberg depicted last week, Nichols joined his wife, Asotin County Sheriff's Detective Jackie Nichols, Asotin County Clerk Marie Eggart and other volunteers in serving up Thanksgiving dinner to inmates at the Asotin County Jail.

Talk about an impressive gesture.

To the people in jail, it's a message of inclusion.

"I think it reminds us that we're serving the community and that the people in here are part of the community," Nichols said.

And to the people who were fortunate enough to learn of this story secondhand, it's a reminder of our shared humanity.

CHEERS ... to Clarkston Mayor Kathleen Warren. No question, she blew it. At the Nov. 24 city council meeting, she was banging her gavel at an unruly group who vehemently disagreed with a 5-2 vote to ban legal pot sales and telling them to "either leave or shut up."

Then Warren did something you almost never see in American public life.

She apologized.

In a letter she submitted the next day - and which appeared in Sunday's Tribune - Warren wrote: "I can offer no excuse for how I reacted. ... All council meetings are held so the council can conduct important city business. This cannot be done while the audience is yelling and delaying the course of the meeting.

"Unfortunately, I did not handle the situation in a manner that encouraged polite behavior. Instead, I reacted to rude behavior by being rude myself. For that, I apologize."

And for that, we say, good for her.

JEERS ... to state Sen. Dean Mortimer, R-Idaho Falls. He's part of the Legislature's Public Defense Reform Committee that just killed a plan to put the state in charge of public defense.

Idaho's under-funded system leaves many criminal defendants with inadequate legal representation. National studies and a threatened American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit have prodded five years of study, but not enough progress.

"Where public defense is really happening, to me, it still comes down to the county," Mortimer says. "If I want someone to make local decisions, the place I have to go is the county."

The Idaho Falls Republican ought to study the U.S. Constitution's Sixth and 14th amendments. He'll find the states - not counties - are held responsible for guaranteeing a fair trial. - M.T.