

# Working for you?

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

DJEERS ... to Rep. Shannon McMillan, R-Silverton. Friday, she had another one of those "McMillan moments." McMillan voted against maintaining the Idaho National Guard Youth Challenge Academy.

Located in the old Pierce school in Clearwater County, the project offers high school dropouts a second chance while creating 45 full-time jobs in a community of 500. Of the operation's \$3.2 million budget, \$2.4 million is federal money and \$800,000 comes from the state.

Since putting the academy on a permanent footing got 46 House votes, joining the 17 contrarians against it was merely a protest on McMillan's part. That's a terrible way to repay Clearwater County, which gave McMillan a 2-to-1 edge over both GOP primary opponent Shauna Hillman last May and Democratic challenger Jessica Chilcott in November.

McMillan told the Tribune's William L. Spence, "It's supposed to be funded with private money, and now it gets money from (the state)."

When reminded that she voted in 2012 in favor of doing precisely that, Spence reported that McMillan "shrugged her shoulders and said she'd have to think about that."

Such is the thought process of a lawmaker who last year stumbled so badly through two bill presentations her colleagues nixed both measures the same day. McMillan also drew an ethics review by voting to continue shielding elected officials from wage garnishments - while her own legislative pay was facing garnishment.

What will McMillan think of next? Any bets?

CHEERS ... to former Idaho Gov. Phil Batt. Honored on the 20th anniversary of his inauguration as Idaho's first GOP governor in 24 years, Batt tore into his fellow Republicans for refusing to extend civil rights protections to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people.

As a state lawmaker in the 1970s, Batt passed the state's Human Rights Act. Last month, Republican members of the House State Affairs Committee lined up en masse to oppose adding the words "sexual orientation and gender identity" to that law.

"Nobody has really explained to me why a gay person can't order a hamburger or rent a room from somebody who serves everybody else," Batt told the Canyon County Lincoln Day banquet Wednesday. "Some opponents of Add the Words say that their religion will not allow it. Write an exemption, as long as it's not just an excuse. Others say it's government intrusion. Would it be OK to deny women the right to vote because it's government intrusion? Would it be OK to deny blacks a hamburger and a room because it's government intrusion? I can see why some

individuals would vote against Add the Words. But to party-line kill it without explanation - Come on!"

More than a year ago, Batt threw his support toward extending Idaho's Human Rights Act. If there's a price for violating Republican orthodoxy, Batt's willing to pay.

"If my interest in civil rights bans me from present-day Idaho GOP," Batt said, "so be it. Some think it does, most do not."

JEERS ... to Washington Senate President Pro Tem Pam Roach, R-Auburn, who had this to say about her neighbors to the east: "We live out in the boonies ... I was alone and somebody drives up into the driveway. This guy looked like a hoarder or he was from some place in - excuse me, I love Idaho - from northern Idaho or something. ... This guy was a whack job."

Owing to her explosive temper and abusive treatment of everyone from legislative staffers to ordinary citizens, Roach has been in and out of political rehab for years. Her own Republican caucus banished her until they needed her vote to control that chamber.

Her recent public beratement of a Washington Food Industry Association representative during a committee hearing drew a rebuke from Lt. Gov. Brad Owen: "Sixteen years of inappropriate and unprofessional conduct is enough."

Northern Idaho whack jobs? Really, Sen. Roach?

JEERS ... to Rep. Paul Shepherd, R-Riggins. Peeved at the federal judiciary for overturning Idaho's same-sex marriage ban, Shepherd lashed together a House Joint Memorial urging Congress to impeach any federal judge who doesn't interpret the U.S. Constitution "as close to the original intent as possible."

Following Shepherd's logic undermines the judiciary's role as an independent and co-equal branch of government.

Would Shepherd have the Supreme Court impeached for desegregating the schools? For insisting that the constitutional rights of criminal defendants be respected? For handing the 2000 presidential election to George W. Bush?

At best, Shepherd's resolution displays a simple ignorance about America's system of government.

At worst, it shows contempt. For a politician who wraps himself in the Constitution, maybe Shepherd should take five minutes and actually read it.

CHEERS ... to Alan Dornfest. Property tax bureau chief for the Idaho State Tax Commission, Dornfest prepares an annual comprehensive and objective review of Idaho's tax burden.

Two years ago, he reported no state imposed a lighter tax burden per person than Idaho.

That has since inched up to 49th place (among the 50 states and the District of Columbia) - owing to improved corporate profitability.

Last month, Dornfest reported Idaho retained that rank - putting it 31.2 percent below the national average and 11th among the 11 Western states.

Which raises these questions: If lower taxes create prosperity, why is Idaho locked in a low-wage, low-skill economy? And what makes Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter and GOP legislative leaders so determined to reduce taxes even more?

JEERS ... to Sen. Bob Nonini, R-Coeur d'Alene. Six years ago, the Great Nonini led a contingent of lawmakers who assured taxpayers the Idaho Education Network would require no state tax dollars.

Even before Otter's mishandling of the IEN contract derailed federal support, Idaho taxpayers were paying about a quarter of the costs. Since then, as Idaho Public Television's Melissa Davlin noted, the price has escalated to \$32.9 million.

This is getting old. Sponsors of last year's guns on campus bill said it wouldn't cost taxpayers a dime. They were off by \$3.7 million.

Likewise, the Idaho Technology Council promoted a computer software tax break with a projected fiscal impact of \$5 million. Idaho's treasury is losing close to \$40 million. - M.T.