

April 16, 2015

## **Grandstanding at the expense of the vulnerable**

*Guest opinion by Representative Luke Malek, R-Coeur d'Alene*

An unfortunate split decision by the Judiciary and Rules committee in the House of Representatives will hurt the most vulnerable in Idaho. Nine members of that committee voted against eight others, including myself, to kill a bill that was critical to child support collection. Their action endangers about \$200 million in support to children in single parent homes all over Idaho, and will cost the state of Idaho \$47 million in federal funding (equivalent to 50% of the amount of money the legislature stayed in Boise an extra three weeks trying to find for transportation).

The reasoning given for this action differs given on which account you believe. Before a single committee member had a chance to discuss the bill, the motion to table, a non-debatable motion, killed the bill without the decency of an explanation.

What could possibly have been so important that nine legislators would decide to shut off our enforcement tools and jeopardize \$250 million in support to vulnerable children in Idaho without debate? According to some legislators who have posted on social media, it is the fear of Sharia law entering Idaho. That notion is impossible...the statutes in question deal only with payments for child support, and the bill updates language to be in compliance for orders for that money when they come from other countries. According to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, less than one hundred of more than 155,000 cases, or less than .001%, in Idaho deal with support orders for money in other countries, and none of the countries subject to this legislation recognize Sharia law. These facts were clear in committee. Our Attorney General has stated that these concerns have no basis in fact, and common sense dictates that Sharia law has nothing to do with monetary support.

Another view, from Representative Lynn Luker, rejects the Sharia law theory, but fights back against federal support of our child support efforts. Rep. Luker states that he knows the reason the bill was held. However, debate was not allowed by him or the other eight, so how he knows the reason is mysterious. He argues that the requirements put in place by the federal government to use the federal portal that enables Idaho to track parents who leave the state and country and the payments they make are too onerous. Perhaps Rep. Luker thinks Idaho ought to be able to use federal resources without any accountability, but that is an unreasonable view, and certainly not a responsible policy-making platform. Idaho cannot expect to reject the rules for using the system and still get to use it. The federal government should not send tax-payer money for keeping the system and helping single-parents in dire circumstances without ensuring the money is responsibly spent

The decision to deconstruct child-support enforcement in Idaho was an erratic decision made by nine people in the legislature. They have violated Republican principles by turning their

backs on fiscal, economic and legal stability. Perhaps it was the thrill of using this bill to make a statement. Perhaps it is the example set by those who jeopardize federal programs with protest votes in Washington D.C.. Whatever the reason, we will never know for sure, because there is no official record due to the lack of debate. What we do know is this: This erratic vote was a slap in the face to Idaho's children, and was an extremely irresponsible example of governance.