

Actions of GOP fringe in Idaho not laughable

The paranoia permeating the far right of the Republican party in Idaho is usually more laughable than anything.

We know their bills trying to advance measures like those calling for the carrying of concealed firearms without any permit or training, "taking back" of federal lands that have never belonged to Idaho, nullifying federal gun control laws and Environmental Protection Agency regulations, and forcing high school students to read Ayn Rand will go nowhere. And if such bills somehow make it past the governor's desk, we can normally be sure a court somewhere will call their nonsense out for what it is.

But we can't exactly call those on the fringe harmless. Unfortunately, they have loud and powerful voices in Idaho - and throughout the nation - and their hate and neurosis isn't always escapable. We see that year after year as the Legislature punts on adding the words "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" to the state's human rights act. Of course they also gave us guns on campus and the "ag-gag bill," and they are largely why Medicaid hasn't been expanded.

We also saw what these legislators could do when in the waning days of the 2015 session they killed a child support bill that put American participation in an international treaty in jeopardy and the state at risk of losing about \$46 million in federal funds out of fears it could force Idaho to follow Islamic law.

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter called legislators back for a special session Monday and an amended version passed in the House 49-21 and the Senate 33-2.

So, 23 of the state's 82 legislators, including Sen. Sheryl Nuxoll who still says the bill will "compromise our freedom," were again willing to jeopardize the health of the state's children because of conspiracy theories and ignorance.

That's not so laughable.

- Devin Rokyta, for the editorial board