

Cheers & Jeers: Entitled dependence

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Idaho state Sen. Sheryl Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood. She has consistently wrapped her opposition to extending Medicaid coverage to 78,000 low-income Idahoans in the cloak of self-righteousness.

Because they earn too little money to qualify for federally subsidized health insurance under Obamacare, these Idahoans delay seeing a doctor. When they do, it's often for an emergency. At that point, taxpayers and other health care consumers pay the bills.

Thirty states, including many of Idaho's neighbors, have accepted Obamacare's offer to cover 100 percent of the Medicaid costs at first - but never less than 90 percent thereafter. If Idaho followed suit, taxpayers would save \$173 million during the next decade. And hundreds of lives would be spared.

Nuxoll is undeterred.

When the issue came up before a joint House-Senate Health and Welfare Committee forum earlier this year, the Cottonwood Republican said the state should focus on getting people off federal assistance.

At the 2014 Idaho Republican State Convention, Nuxoll authored a resolution proposing free-market alternatives and charity over Medicaid expansion.

"Lots of states oppose the expansion," she told the Tribune's William L. Spence. "There are some great ideas, great alternatives out there. Our state should look at those, rather than making people more dependent on government."

Nuxoll apparently does not mind being dependent on federal farm payments, however.

As Idaho Falls Post Register columnists Jerry and Carrie Scheid noted recently, Nuxoll and her husband Felix received more than \$234,000 in federal farm subsidies between 1995 and 2012.

Nuxoll is not alone. Want to see who else in Idaho's conservative Legislature is lapping up federal handouts? Check out the Environmental Working Group website at www.farm.ewg.org.

What the Scheids did not mention is how state lawmakers such as Nuxoll also qualify for state health insurance coverage - which you, the taxpayers, provide. That's on top of the Medicare coverage many of Nuxoll's more senior colleagues receive.

Funny, isn't it?

Nuxoll says extending Medicaid to Idaho's neediest citizens breeds dependency.

What about her own government handouts and insurance coverage?

Those are merely entitlements.

JEERS ... to Elizabeth Hallock, the Camas, Wash.-based lawyer better known in Clarkston as the advocate for pot store operators Matt Plemmons and Aaron Tatum. Hallock applied for the Clarkston city attorney contract.

When Hallock didn't get it, she went hyperbolic.

"Clarkston's council members, most of whom are being sued for their shenanigans, don't want a woman or a black man as their attorney," Hallock told the Tribune's Kerri Sandaine. Hallock said she planned to contract with an African-American attorney.

She's got every right to be steamed about a lame-duck council imposing Todd Richardson - Hallock's adversary in the ongoing legal battle over retail marijuana operations - on the newly elected councilors taking office next month.

But accusing Clarkston of misogyny?

Did Hallock fail to notice four of Clarkston's past five mayors have been women?

CHEERS ... to Idaho Department of Correction Director Kevin Kempf. More than two years ago, Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter said the state could not afford to comply with a federal law meant to stop prison rapes.

Behind the scenes, however, Kempf - and his predecessor, former Director Brent Reinke - brought the state prison system, juvenile corrections and county jails as close to compliance as possible.

It paid off last week when Otter announced Idaho was following the federal mandate.

The change could mean a resumption of about \$82,000 a year in federal grants. More importantly, it pledges to protect inmates from being brutalized in prison.

CHEERS ... to Idaho Senate Local Government and Taxation Committee Chairman Jeff C. Siddoway, R-Terreton.

A year ago, Siddoway announced no tax bill would clear his desk until the state made good on its pledge to increase teacher salaries. He drew some flak, not the least of which came from Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry President Alex LeBeau, who unleashed a torrent of profanity in Siddoway's direction. But the Terreton Republican held his ground.

Earlier this year, Siddoway was named co-chairman of the Legislature's Tax Working Group, which explored income, sales and personal property tax cuts.

Tuesday, the panel adjourned without backing any changes. Siddoway reiterated his position, telling Idaho Education News he agreed with Sen. Grant Burgoyne, D-Boise, that Idaho should impose a one-year "tax moratorium" while focusing on education.

"Beyond that, we're willing to look," he said.

CHEERS ... to Congressman Mike Simpson, R-Idaho. As far as anyone can tell, he's the only prominent Idaho Republican to challenge GOP presidential frontrunner Donald Trump's plan to ban Muslims from entering the United States.

When the Capitol Hill newspaper The Hill asked Simpson whether Trump should quit the race, he said, "No. But he's nuts."

Good for him. He joins other prominent Republicans - including House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell - who labeled Trump's plan unconstitutional.

But have you heard anything from Idaho Republican Party Chairman Steve Yates? At your expense, the state GOP moved up its presidential primary to March 8 in order to have a greater voice in the selection of the nominee.

How about Gov. Otter? He's asking corporate Idaho to ante up for his own super PAC, which he plans to use toward guiding the path of the Republican Party. Does Trump speak for him?

Wouldn't you expect Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho, to step up? After all, he's Rand Paul's Western states campaign chairman - and Paul hasn't exactly been shy about blasting Trump's ideas.

The same goes for Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, who has endorsed Marco Rubio. Where is he?

Could it be they're listening to National Republican Senatorial Committee Executive Director Ward Baker?

In a Sept. 22 memo, Baker wrote: "Trump rises because people understand him. ... Understand the populist points Trump makes and ride the wave."

Is that what's going on here?