

Agitators

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to the legislative agitators who thrust themselves into the standoff at Oregon's Malheur Wildlife Refuge last weekend.

You'd think Washington state Rep. Matt Shea, R-Spokane Valley, and Idaho state Reps. Heather Scott, R-Blanchard, Sage Dixon, R-Ponderay, and Judy Boyle, R-Midvale, would have something better to do.

You know - like their jobs in Olympia and Boise, respectively.

Nor can they take a hint. Oregon state Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, asked them to mind their own business.

But there they went on a "fact-finding" tour to meet with the armed insurrectionists led by another outsider - Nevada's Ammon Bundy - who have occupied the refuge area and won't leave until the federal government surrenders.

If you're looking for a dispassionate gathering of facts about the Bundy boys, don't expect to obtain it from legislators who make the Tea Party look like the Urban League:

- When he isn't occupied fighting Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich, Shea is busy selling the idea that the federal government has drawn up plans to disarm citizens and put them in concentration camps. This has not gone unnoticed by the Southern Poverty Law Center.
- Just a year into office, Scott has disgraced herself twice. Last summer, she wrapped herself in the Confederate Battle Flag at the July 25 Priest River Timber Days - even as the rest of the country had distanced itself from this symbol of slavery and racism. Then in November, she went renegade on the Syrian refugee issue by calling Muslim immigration "an intentional invasion of our country" that should be stopped by a special session of the Idaho Legislature.
- Dixon distinguished himself early in last year's legislative session by selling his office to the National Rifle Association. When he proposed a "Friends of the NRA" license plate, Dixon said he was merely returning a favor: "The NRA did support me during the general election, so I thought it was a good start."
- Boyle is no novice. She's in her fourth term. She lobbied for the Idaho Farm Bureau. And she has seen this kind of controversy first-hand. She served on the staff of former Congresswoman Helen Chenoweth-Hage, who famously reacted to the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City by saying: "While we can never condone this, we still must begin to look at the public policies that may be pushing people too far."

By traveling to Malheur, these legislators have blown a huge dog whistle to people who think it's just fine to take up arms against your own government.

That's about as subtle as safecrackers doing some "fact-finding" about bank robbery. Or car chop shop owners exploring the subject of hot-wiring. Or even check forgers studying calligraphy.

CCHEERS... to Idaho legislative budget committee co-chairwoman, Sen. Shawn Keough, R-Sandpoint.

The way things are going in Idaho's Panhandle, Keough takes a risk every time she thinks for herself. The latest example: An as-yet unidentified group that has put up the site

www.retireshawkeough.com.

Among its distortions, it claims Keough is pro-abortion.

No, she voted against Boise Republican Sen. Chuck Winder's 2012 bill to require anyone seeking an abortion to submit to state-sponsored rape - an invasive transvaginal ultrasound. Winder's idea was so outrageous that even the conservative Idaho House buried it.

It calls her anti-gun rights. No. But neither did she think it was a good idea to inject concealed weapons into a college campus setting. Idaho lawmakers disregarded the advice of just about everyone - such as cops, students, parents, faculty and college administrators - to follow the dictates of the gun lobby. Not six months later, the skeptics were proved right when Idaho State University professor Byron Bennett accidentally shot himself in the foot while giving a lecture.

The website says Keough supports Muslim immigration - there's been no vote on that.

It says she voted for Obamacare. If you don't like Obamacare, blame Congress, not a state senator from Sandpoint. And if you're peeved about Common Core, talk to the members of the House and Senate Education committees who approved it. Keough was not among them.

And what if this clandestine group somehow succeeds?

The last thing the Panhandle needs is yet another Republican who treats every issue as a litmus test.

JEERS ... to Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn. He's keeping strange company. At least Auditor Troy Kelley had a good reason for boycotting Gov. Jay Inslee's State of the State address Tuesday: He's under federal indictment and there's bipartisan agreement that he ought to quit.

But what was Dorn thinking when he walked out - and left a note behind: "Reserved for kids and students"?

Even Washington's Supreme Court justices - who presumably will decry Inslee's decision to punt on resolving their McCleary decision on school funding until after the election - remained in the chamber.

Which is what you do when you hold statewide office. Throwing a tantrum breaks with courtesy, tradition and decorum. It doesn't help the schools and it hasn't done much for Dorn's standing, either.

JEERS ... to Lewiston Police Chief Chris Ankeny. If you're going to sell transparency, you probably ought to consider being transparent yourself.

Ankeny has a good idea: equipping his officers with body cameras. For citizens, this offers a measure of accountability. And for cops, it's protection against unfounded claims of excessive force. Speaking to the Lewiston City Council Monday, Ankeny said that where body cameras have been used, complaints against officers have dropped.

But it's going to take money. A \$35,000 grant will pay for the equipment. What LPD needs is a new staffer to coordinate, catalog and index the information.

Ankeny says that will cost \$70,000.

Yet a police chief with a good story to tell and who needs public support to cover new costs is clamming up.

Ankeny refused to answer Lewiston Tribune reporter Ralph Bartholdt's repeated telephone calls. In an email, he referred Bartholdt to the video presentation he delivered Monday.

There's just one problem with that: The video presentation is not yet available online.

What's up with that? - M.T.