

No respect

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Idaho Republican Party Chairman Steve Yates. When Idaho Falls Dr. Kenneth Krell had the temerity to challenge GOP legislators earlier this month, Yates besmirched his reputation.

Director of critical care at Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center, Krell was the last doctor who tried to save Jenny Steinke, an uninsured Idaho Falls woman who died from complications of untreated asthma. Steinke's ghost has been haunting a state Capitol where the GOP-led Legislature has refused to expand Medicaid coverage to 78,000 uninsured working poor adults.

Steinke is only one of many low-income Idahoans who are dying prematurely because they don't have access to preventive health care. The number may be as high as 800 each year.

"I can only come to one inescapable conclusion: That the Idaho Legislature is unfortunately responsible for those deaths," Krell said. "Please stop the killing."

Yates is blind to anyone who acts out of a sincere moral conviction. To him, everyone is a cynical political toady.

"Last week ... Idaho Democrats trotted out a doctor to use the tragic story of one of his patients to call Idaho Republicans murderers," Yates wrote in the Idaho Statesman.

Had Yates checked the facts before writing, he would have known Democrats had nothing to do with it. Susie Pouliot, chief executive officer of the Idaho Medical Association, arranged for Krell to testify - although the IMA had no input on his remarks.

Yates doesn't have to like what Krell said. But shouldn't the leader of Idaho's majority political party show a little more respect for any private citizen who merely exercised his constitutional right to tell off his elected legislators?

JEERS ... to Idaho state Reps. Judy Boyle, R-Midvale, and Heather Scott, R-Blanchard. These two must have an exalted opinion of themselves. It's for others to remain in Boise and work on budgets, taxes, public safety, school policy or anything else under the Capitol Dome.

Boyle and Scott are simply too important for such mundane matters.

So off they journeyed last week for their second sojourn to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, where the standoff involving four occupiers - including Sean and Sandy Anderson of Riggins - was coming to its conclusion. Ultimately, the Andersons, Jeff Banta of Elko, Nev., and the last holdout, David Fry of Blanchester, Ohio, surrendered peacefully.

"These aren't my constituents, but they are Idahoans; they are four lives," Boyle told the Idaho Statesman. "We figured the FBI wouldn't kill legislators as much as regular citizens like they did two weeks ago. ... We were there as shields."

Among the parties credited in talking the four occupiers out of the refuge were FBI negotiators, right-wing commentator KrisAnne Hall, Nevada Assembly member Michele Fiore and evangelist Franklin Graham.

Boyle and Scott were standing several miles away.

These two are marinating in the delusion that they are world-class provocateurs instead of a pair of third-rate attention seekers.

JEERS ... to Idaho County Sheriff Doug Giddings. Earlier this month, Giddings struck the right chords when he described the Andersons as local constituents who had gotten in over their heads and offered to help the FBI defuse the situation.

But he stepped over the line when he told the Tribune's Kathy Hedberg the Andersons "made a bad choice on when, where and how to do that. ... What's the penalty for that? ... The government is getting to where you better not threaten. ... You don't talk like that to the government or your parents or anybody else. It can get you in trouble."

Well here's what Sean Anderson said in a video posted online:

"American people better wake up and get here and fight for your country right now, it is on. If they stop you from getting here, kill them."

Would Giddings be so cavalier if someone posted an online video threatening violence against some of his deputies?

CHEERS ... to Washington state Rep. Mary Dye, R-Pomeroy. Considering the boorish way she treated a group of Pullman-area teenagers last month, you might be surprised to learn Dye wound up agreeing with them.

Five representatives of the Palouse Teen Council of Planned Parenthood lobbied Dye about requiring insurance companies to allow women to purchase a year's worth of contraception at a time.

"OK, so we know you're not a virgin," Dye said. "Now how about the rest of you?"

The incident occurred at Dye's Olympia office.

But last week, the Washington House approved the contraception measure, House Bill 2465, by a margin of 91-6. Among those who voted yes was Dye. Her seatmate, Rep. Joe Schmick, R-Colfax, voted no.

So give Dye credit for this much: She apparently kept an open mind to what those teenage lobbyists were telling her.

JEERS ... to Idaho state Sen. Sheryl Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood. When you're busy pandering to the American Legislative Exchange Council, you may miss a few details. For instance, the ALEC-inspired bill she's carrying is little more than a political billboard.

Nuxoll wants to give county sheriffs and county commissioners a platform to declare overgrown, diseased or insect-infected forests a "catastrophic public nuisance."

Which would beg the followup: OK, then what?

The federal government does not answer to a county sheriff or a county commissioner.

If Nuxoll wants to accomplish something meaningful, why doesn't she join with people from all points on the natural resource spectrum who are seeking solutions through a collaborative process?

But that takes real work, not grandstanding in Boise.

CHEERS ... to Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter. Last week, Otter made it clear he's sticking by his ambitious program to boost teacher pay, restore public school budgets and make higher education more affordable.

Tax cuts? Those can wait.

"My priority is my education package," he told reporters. "My priority is the budget package that I put forward. I would answer your question not directly about that tax bill, but about what my priorities are."

That puts Otter squarely with Idaho public opinion. A Boise State University survey shows people don't want tax cuts, but they are concerned about the quality of their schools.

To a state Senate that has been sitting on the House-passed \$28 million tax cut package, the governor's words can mean only one thing: Stay the course. Good for Otter. - M.T.