

# California dreaming

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to Alan Littlejohn of Athol. Who would have thought he'd give greedy, selfish, hypocritical California carpetbaggers a bad name?

Littlejohn, who is challenging Rep. Eric Redman, R-Athol, in the May 17 primary, didn't mind the high California taxes that set him up in style in northern Idaho. The 53-year-old retiree - yes, 53 - lives on a \$68,000 annual pension he earned as a firefighter in the Golden State.

But now that he's here, Littlejohn won't spend one more dime on taxes than he has to - and he'd like to spend much less, even if it means depriving your kids of a decent future.

If Littlejohn had his way, the supplemental property tax levies that support virtually every school in the state would be at risk. He'd require all of those to pass by a near-impossible two-thirds majority rather than 50 percent plus 1.

That's a bad deal for students in 94 of Idaho's 115 school districts, which rely on those local property taxes to backfill years of neglect at the hands of state lawmakers. But it's an instant windfall - possibly as much as \$186.6 million statewide - for property owners who don't care about the schools.

Littlejohn also told the Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell he'd starve higher education.

"I don't think the state of Idaho should fund anything above the 12th grade," he said. So he'd freeze the state budget supporting colleges and universities.

For his convenience, California taxpayers were supposed to dig deep - and Idaho's young people are supposed to settle for much less.

California dreaming? Maybe.

Public service? Hardly.

CCHEERS... to Carrie and Jerry Scheid of Idaho Falls. They defended Idaho's Sunshine Law, which demands politicians disclose where they get their campaign cash.

For almost two years, rumors swirled around the Tea Party-oriented Integrity in Government PAC headed up by Ahsahka political operative - and Republican regional chairwoman - LeeAnn Callear. Just on the eve of its 2014 GOP primary campaign against Republican incumbents deemed ideologically deficient - such as Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter and Attorney General Lawrence Wasden - Integrity in Government rounded up the astonishing amount of \$123,500 from just 14 contributors within one week.

The first clue came when Callear's PAC claimed to have received \$12,000 from former 2nd Congressional District candidate M.C. "Chick" Heilesen. At the time he ran for Congress in 2012, Heilesen filled out the required federal financial paperwork that showed a household income of less than \$30,000 - nearly half of it coming from Social Security - and no personal assets.

Last December, Idaho Falls attorney and political columnist Steve Taggart sifted through Sunshine reports and found other questionable contributions.

But state officials had little to go with until Jan. 13, when the Scheids filed their complaint with Secretary of State Lawrence "Boss" Denney - who then asked Wasden to investigate.

This week, Wasden's office formally accused Heilesen of laundering a contribution actually made by Bonneville County Republican Chairman Doyle Beck of Idaho Falls.

Both men have been charged with a misdemeanor. And because Wasden alleges they knowingly and willfully engaged in this criminal enterprise, Heilesen and Beck face a potential six-month jail term.

None of this would have happened but for two Idaho citizens who held their government to account.

CHEERS ... to state Sen. Bob Nonini, R-Coeur d'Alene. That's not a misprint. Two terms in the Senate have broadened the "Great Nonini."

Four years ago, when Nonini was trying to make the leap from the House to the Senate, he arrogantly steered money from his own Idaho Association for Good Government PAC toward challenging GOP incumbent senators he deemed insufficiently conservative. Among the people he attacked were Sens. Shawn Keough, R-Sandpoint, Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, and John Tippetts, R-Bennington.

Cameron is running the state Department of Insurance. Tippetts directs the Department of Environmental Quality.

Keough - Cameron's successor as co-chairwoman of the legislative budget-writing committee - may be in the political fight of her life in the May 17 GOP primary.

Now it's Nonini who has come to her aid - touting her help in his efforts to promote STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and reminding voters of her legislative clout.

"We've had chairmen from northern Idaho in the past, but now we have a chairwoman who is in the most influential position in the Legislature," Nonini told columnist Chuck Malloy. "Why would we risk losing that? We would gain nothing, and we would lose so much influence and clout."

Asked about his anti-incumbent campaign in 2012, Nonini told Malloy: "It was a heck of a mistake on my part, because they were very nice people."

None of this suggests Nonini has tempered his own hard-core voting pattern, which earned one of the nine "A's" on the Idaho Freedom Foundation's index.

Just the same, Nonini's base is typically unforgiving toward perceived acts of heresy. He's sticking his neck out.

JEERS ... to state Sen. Curt McKenzie, R-Boise. He has crossed the line in the four-way race to succeed retiring Idaho Supreme Court Chief Justice Jim Jones.

Idaho's Supreme Court is a non-partisan position. So you'd hope people running for that post would keep party labels out of it. When the expectation of an impartial judiciary is dashed, people lose faith in the courts.

But McKenzie hasn't let that - or the Idaho Code of Judicial Conduct - deter him from playing the party card. As the Spokesman-Review's Russell reported, he's actively campaigned at GOP Lincoln Day events and drawn his support exclusively from Republican lawmakers.

"I've gotten significant support of the people I've asked," he said.

There's a reason why McKenzie - like Supreme Court Justice Dan Eismann in 2000 - campaigns this way. It works.

If a judicial candidate can win an outright majority in the primary election, he wins. If not, the two candidates with the most votes proceed to a run-off in November. The surest path toward victory is appealing to Republicans, who outnumber Democratic voters in the primary election by more than five to one.

"Sen. McKenzie is running a risk," Aman McLeod, a visiting professor of law at the University of Idaho, told Russell. "But all I can say is it worked for Justice Eismann." - M.T.