

McMillan has an excuse? Thanks, Obama

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

You knew Obama Derangement Syndrome was at its zenith when the president got blamed for everything.

High unemployment?

Terrorism abroad?

Soaring energy costs?

It was Barack Obama's fault.

Which triggered a counter-reaction among satirists, who mocked the president's irrational critics with the punch line: "Thanks, Obama."

Got a paper cut?

Thanks, Obama.

Ran out of toilet paper?

Thanks, Obama.

Seahawks didn't make the Super Bowl?

Thanks, Obama.

Now comes Rep. Shannon McMillan, R-Silverton, with a new variation.

Two years ago, McMillan sponsored a bill that would have stopped the state from enforcing water quality standards.

As the Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell reported at the time, McMillan could barely put together a coherent sentence, let alone a compelling case for the measure.

"Requiring that discharge is more pure than a natural background level is an undue burden upon businesses and local governments and is beyond the scope and intent of water quality laws," she told an embarrassed House environment committee.

The longer the session dragged on, the more painful it became - until one lawmaker asked McMillan to explain why she drafted a bill that suspended water quality enforcement statewide.

"Because I took it up to the legislative services, and this is what they gave me," McMillan said.

After the panel rejected McMillan's bill, she never again attempted such a legislative feat.

Now we know why.

"My people in Shoshone County want me to deal with the (Environmental Protection Agency)," McMillan told the Tribune's William L. Spence. "But as long as we have this president, I'm not going to get anywhere with my bills."

In other words:

Thanks, Obama.

Too bad McMillan didn't come up with this sooner. Imagine how handy this would have been two years ago when GOP House leaders caught McMillan in a blatant conflict of interest.

At the time, state law exempted elected officials from wage garnishment by debt collectors. McMillan had contested a writ of garnishment by citing that provision.

When it came time to consider a bill repealing the double standard, McMillan voted no.

Instead of apologizing and requesting an ethics review, McMillan could have simply said:

Thanks, Obama.

How about when Spence confronted McMillan last year about the fact that she voted against maintaining the Idaho National Guard Youth Challenge Academy in Pierce - in her own legislative district - three years after she voted precisely the opposite?

Instead of shrugging her shoulders and telling Spence she'd have to think about that, McMillan could have replied:

Thanks, Obama.

When a tongue-tied McMillan could not explain to Spence why she turned thumbs down on the public school budgets in 2015 and again this year, her standby would have been ready:

Thanks, Obama.

Or how about when a pair of studies more or less marginalized McMillan?

The Idaho Statesman's Bill Dentzer ranked McMillan second highest among lawmakers who routinely vote against spending bills.

And the same Idaho Freedom Foundation that flunked virtually half the Legislature gave McMillan an "A" - putting her among only nine hard-liners.

She could have harrumphed:

Thanks, Obama.

So add it up.

Here's a state lawmaker who can't - or won't - sponsor a bill.

Here's a state lawmaker who can't - or won't - vote to keep government's lights on.

Here's a state lawmaker who can't - or won't - explain herself.

Why should she? Not as long as she has a scapegoat in the White House.

Thanks, Obama. - M.T.