

# Yochum's gutsy vote

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

CHEERS ... to Lewiston School Board member Dale Yochum. On Monday, he delivered the fifth vote to build a new high school, making it unanimous. Yochum also forever linked himself to the plan by making the motion.

Talk about a personal journey. Five years ago, Yochum headed up the Taxpayers Against Unfair Taxation's campaign to defeat the district's proposed \$52 million high school bond. At the time, Yochum questioned the price and the need for a new campus. Shortly thereafter, he was elected to the board.

Yochum insisted upon and got a new architect - Leathan, Krohn and Van Ocker of Boise, and RGU Architecture and Planning of Lewiston. But he did not filter out the facts he was getting: New construction could be held to about \$59.8 million while renovating the 1928 campus would cost \$94.6 million.

Those within Yochum's political base who are willing to listen will find him credible. Those who are fixed in their views will consider him a turncoat.

Either way, Yochum displayed something you don't see all that often in politics - courage.

JEERS ... to Idaho County Commissioners Mark Frei, Jim Chmelik and Skip Brandt. Their reason for withholding support from the Grangeville Kids Klub community block grant proposal evaporated last week.

Why are they still dragging their feet?

Kids Klub needs a building. The project already has lined up a \$200,000 pledge from the Orrin and Eleanor Webb estate. The block grant would yield up to \$300,000 more.

When the topic came up May 2, commissioners asked whether it might interfere with other projects. Fair enough.

But by May 6, it was clear Syringa Hospital and Clinic locked down its \$500,000 community block grant. Rapid River Water and Sewer District got its \$300,000 grant.

Why didn't the commissioners come back this week and address the Kids Klub request?

It's not as if the project isn't vital. Kids Klub serves more than 500 children in a community where nearly 57 percent of the people are living on low to moderate incomes.

Here's Frei's explanation: "I wish that the kids were with their parents as opposed to a program."

Frei, Chmelik and Brandt aren't saying they have less sympathy for kids whose lives don't resemble the "Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet" - are they?

JEERS ... to Washington State Auditor Troy Kelley. Do you get the feeling Washington has found its version of Roy Cohn - the take-no-prisoners political hatchet man who frequently whistled past the graveyard of federal indictments?

Kelley acts as if he's been acquitted. He's merely been spared by a hung jury at his federal trial on money laundering and possession of stolen property charges.

Federal prosecutors may have another go at him.

But Kelley unleashed his inner Cohn and started whacking away at the staff that helped keep the lights on at Washington's watchdog agency during the 14 months he was under indictment.

Without explanation, Kelley fired:

- Chief of Staff Doug Cochran, who joined the auditor's office 11 years ago.
- Deputy Communications Director Adam Wilson, a former reporter for the Lewiston Tribune.
- Thomas Shapley, special assistant to deputy Auditor Jan Jutte.

Kelley also extended a middle finger to Gov. Jay Inslee, who invoked a rarely used constitutional provision to ask what the auditor was up to.

But. Kelley won't resign. Until his term ends in January, Washington is stuck with him.

JEERS ... to former Idaho Administration Director Mike Gwartney. His mismanagement of the massive Idaho Education Network continues to snare new victims.

Gwartney's decision to steer the IEN contract away from the legitimate low-bidder Syringa Network LLC and toward the politically influential Qwest (now CenturyLink) was deemed "corrupt" by the Idaho Supreme Court, which voided the contract. The federal government withheld e-rate dollars, which were supposed to pay about three-quarters of the IEN's \$60 million price tag.

Now it turns out 57 Idaho school districts and charters will feel more pain.

As Idaho Education News' Kevin Richert reported, the Universal Service Administrative Co. will retain about \$2 million worth of e-rate dollars local schools counted on when they signed up for auxillary services tied to the IEN in 2013-2014.

Among the districts getting stung are:

- Mountain View - \$179,130
- Orofino - \$27,547

- Kamiah - \$13,041
- Cottonwood - \$11,124
- Highland - \$7,303
- Moscow - \$6,246

JEERS ... to legislative candidate Jake Stephens of Caldwell. He's challenging state Rep. Ryan Kerby, R-New Plymouth, in Tuesday's GOP primary election.

Six months ago, Stephens posted a picture of himself on a hunting trip on his Facebook page.

A friend posted a question: "Are you hunting for rabbits? lol."

Replied Stephens: "Nope. Just Mexicans. lol."

Stephens says he's just engaging in banter with friends who understand no harm is meant - and the media is engaging in political correctness by bringing it up.

But why would a candidate for any public office make light of committing violence on people based simply on their ethnicity? What's funny about that?

CHEERS ... to Senate tax committee Chairman Jeff Siddoway, R-Terreton. Among the senior lawmakers who face no challengers, only Siddoway takes no campaign contributions.

Most unopposed lawmakers - especially those in leadership - take all the money they can get. In the most recent election cycle, House Speaker Scott Bedke, R-Oakley, for instance, raised more than \$69,000 plus another \$36,000 through a New Horizons political action committee.

Forwarding that money to other lawmakers buys legislative leaders the loyalty of their caucus members. But it also binds Bedke and others to the special interests that forked over the checks.

On the other hand, notice the independence Siddoway's stance gives him.

You'll see it every time he denies corporate

Idaho's request for a tax cut. - M.T.