

Nielsen didn't get House leader's endorsement despite claim

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Idaho Rep. Pete Nielsen says he didn't have House Speaker Scott Bedke's endorsement, despite running ads in several weekly papers claiming the House leader supported Nielsen's run for re-election.

Nielsen, a Republican from Mountain Home, told The Associated Press on Friday that he faced a strict newspaper deadline and could not wait for Bedke's response to a request for endorsement. However, Nielsen says that he received Bedke's endorsement two years ago, which he assumed he would get again for this year.

"There comes a time when you face a deadline and you have to make a decision," Nielsen said. "I've always had his support in the past. I don't know why it would change now."

Bedke did not immediately return requests for comment.

Nielsen says he has not heard from Bedke since placing the ads but has left several messages for him.

Earlier this year, Nielsen pleaded not guilty to poaching charges. According to court documents, officers with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game cited Nielsen for illegal possession of a spike elk in Elmore County — roughly 40 miles east of Boise — on Dec. 29. Officials say Nielsen's hunting license only permitted legally killing an antlerless elk.

His plea and sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 17, the same day as the upcoming primary election.

Nielsen is running against Megan Blanksma, a farmer from Hammett and current Elmore County Republican chairwoman. During the 2014 election, Nielsen won by just 83 votes against his GOP opponent.

The 77-year-old Nielsen has served in the Idaho Statehouse since 2002. Known as a far right conservative, Nielsen sits as vice-chair on the House Education

Committee. He has never been appointed to oversee a legislative committee nor won a legislative leadership position

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