

## **Idaho House candidate defends Facebook comment**

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — An Idaho legislative candidate says he was joking when he wrote on his Facebook page that he was out hunting Mexicans.

The comment was posted in October beneath a picture of the candidate, Jake Stephens, dressed in full camouflage gear and holding a rifle.

Stephens, a Republican from Caldwell, is running against first-term Rep. Ryan Kerby, R-New Plymouth, in the Tuesday primary election.

Stephens said Thursday he was teasing a close friend, who is Mexican.

In the comment thread, the friend asked Stephens if he was out hunting rabbits. Stephens responded, "Nope just Mexicans. Lol."

Stephens said he had no plans to delete the comment and would not joke like that in the Statehouse if elected.

Less than an hour after he talked to The Associated Press, the photo was no longer publicly available.

"This is banter back and forth between friends," Stephens said. "This wasn't meant to offend anyone. We've become so politically correct that we can't have a conversation among friends."

Stephens and Kerby are running for legislative District 9, which encompasses Payette, Washington and Adams counties.

Adams County has a 3 percent Hispanic population, while Washington and Payette counties have more than a 16 percent Hispanic population, according to the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

There are no Hispanics in the state Legislature.

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