

Maybe all pols should be secretly recorded

Bill McKee/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

It's too bad we don't get to hear the secret recording that Republican Rep. Ron Nate of Rexburg is in hot water for making.

He was accused by Idaho Senate Pro Tem Brent Hill of covertly recording their conversation before the May primary. Before the primaries Hill announced he would be backing Nate's opponent, an unusual move since Republicans traditionally endorse incumbents within their party. Nate won the primary anyway.

Nate denied a public records request for the recording by The Post Register on the grounds it would infringe on his privacy rights. He didn't mention any concern over Hill's privacy rights. We can't help wondering if his answer would have been different if he hadn't won the primary.

"The record you request relates to 'personal business' and as such its disclosure further would constitute an unwarranted invasion of my personal privacy," Nate wrote in an email to the Register.

He did, however, post on social media that he's seen too much lying and cheating in the Idaho Statehouse and that recording a conversation is a way to protect oneself. As a one-party consent state, recording a conversation either in person or on the phone is legal as long as one member of the conversation - in this case, Nate - gives his consent.

What makes this of particular interest to us is the similarity to the run up to Republican candidate John Freeland's withdrawal from the District 5 Senate race. Freeland dropped out of the race two weeks ago following a contentious conversation after the state Republican convention earlier this month.

Freeland said Thomas Lawford, Latah County GOP chairman, Gresham Bouma, 5th Legislative District GOP chairman, and Carl Berglund, 5th District vice chairman, called for his withdrawal at that time. Lawford denied the accusation and told the Daily News they were just asking him to rein in his comments on social media.

A subsequent rant on Facebook and front-page article in the Daily News undoubtedly forced the issue, which may well have been what the Republican officials had hoped, but the conversation at the convention suddenly has a familiar ring.

If only Freeland had thought to bring along a recorder.