

# Blowing it

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to Democratic candidates Jerry Sturgill, James Piotrowski and Jennifer Martinez, all of Boise.

Sturgill believes he would do a better job in the U.S. Senate than Republican Mike Crapo, who has spent 23 years in Washington, D.C.

Piotrowski says he can improve upon the work done by Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho, who has spent six years in the House.

Martinez thinks Idahoans would be better off if voters select her over nine-term incumbent Congressman Mike Simpson, R-Idaho.

Yet none of them seems capable of meeting even a simple deadline.

As far back as Aug. 5, organizers of the Idaho Debates notified each Democratic campaign they had until Sept. 2 to file the necessary background information.

Because all three blew the deadline, the debates have been canceled.

That's bad for Idaho voters, who for the first time in more than 30 years won't see congressional candidates debating live on statewide public television.

But it's downright political malpractice for these Democratic candidates who just squandered their best opportunity to introduce themselves to the public. Even if they didn't know better, where was Idaho Democratic Party Chairman Bert Marley, who as a former state senator and candidate for lieutenant governor knows the ropes?

The only way they may get a second chance is if Crapo, Labrador and Simpson agree to debate them somewhere else - and it is not in the self-interests of these Republican incumbents to do anything of the kind.

Is this how the challengers handle their own affairs?

Does Sturgill fail to pay his income taxes on time?

Does Piotrowski forget to renew his automobile registration?

Does Martinez delay paying her utility bills?

What does this say about their ability to serve in public office? If they can't even ride a bicycle, why trust them with the keys to the family car?

JEERS ... to Chris Eyler of Seattle. The executive director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Northwest Region offered this advice to employers facing a federal mandate to provide overtime to more of their employees: Just cut their pay rate.

At present, employers can get around overtime rules by declaring people earning at least \$23,660 a year as salaried workers. But after Dec. 1, most people earning less than \$47,476 a year are entitled to overtime when they go over 40 hours a week.

Eyler's solution: Lower their hourly wage to negate the effect of overtime.

"You're trying to look for a solution where they make at least what they do now," Eyer said.

Say you're earning \$24,000 and working 45 hours a week. To circumvent the new rules, your boss cuts your hourly rate from \$11.54 to \$10.93.

Did someone not tell Eyer that Idaho workers have not shared equally in the state's economic recovery?

From 2009 to 2014, Idaho industry profits rose nearly 22 percent. For the same five years, Idaho's median income increased 5.35 percent.

Is Eyer unaware that the state's per capita income - \$36,728 - lags behind every other state except South Carolina, West Virginia and Mississippi?

How much lower does Eyer think Idaho wages should fall?

JEERS ... to Whitman County Prosecutor Denis Tracy. It's bad enough for Washington State University President Kirk Schulz and Athletic Director Bill Moos to defer taking a hard look at the behavior of their football players until after the season is safely behind them.

But winning football games is their business.

Tracy, on the other hand, is the top law enforcement official in his jurisdiction. And he just told the Moscow-Pullman Daily News' Josh Babcock that he may not launch any criminal charges until December.

Police have implicated four WSU football players - Shalom Luani, Logan Tago, T.J. Fehoko and Robert Barber.

Luani is accused of punching another student for delaying his pizza order.

Tago faces charges that he joined five others in assaulting a man for a case of beer.

Fehoko and Barber are alleged to have assaulted fellow students at a house party.

Three of the four played Saturday against the University of Idaho; the fourth continues to practice with the team.

Despite Coach Mike Leach's contention that police are picking on his boys, the Spokesman-Review's Thomas Clouse reported Sunday that ArrestNation.com put WSU in the front of the line for the number of its athletes who get in trouble with the law. The webpage found 31 arrests in the past five years - compared to 24 for second-place Florida - and Clouse found six more, bringing WSU's total number up to 37.

Tracy told Babcock he generally needs about four months from the time of the incident to review a case and determine whether he has the evidence to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. If that rule applies to Luani - whose case file Tracy received last week - he might not decide to prosecute until Christmas Eve.

Ask someone experienced in the criminal justice system and he will tell you four months sounds long - certainly if you are trying to preserve evidence and witness testimony.

And what about the victims, some of whom are recovering from injuries? What are they to think while the football players continue to take the field? How long must they wait for closure, a sense of vindication and a measure of accountability?

Maybe it's only a coincidence, but Tracy's schedule serves WSU's interests far more than the victims.

CHEERS ... to Camille Lame of Lewiston. As you observe the new L shimmering on the Lewiston Hill, remember her.

And remember her oldest son, Philip, who taught math at Lewiston High School. Named Lewiston's teacher of the year in 2001, Philip Lane died of prostate cancer in 2010.

It was the 90-year-old Camille - member of LHS's Class of 1942 - who six months ago donated \$6,000 to students planning to replace painted rocks with a permanent structure. She wanted it as a tribute to her son.

"You'll have to work harder now," Lane told them. "I'm calling your bluff."

As the Tribune's Mary Stone noted Saturday, the promise was redeemed this month. Students finished constructing an L from metal roofing panels.

Lane watched it all taking shape from the window of her apartment at Guardian Angel Homes: "This is important to me, and so I'm thrilled to death." - M.T.