

Idaho will forgive Trump anything - almost

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

For five years, Donald Trump has been the face and voice of the birther movement - the smear that Barack Obama was not born in Hawaii or anywhere else in the U.S. and therefore was not qualified to hold his office.

Finally, after what the New York Times called "five years of dodging, winking and joking," Trump bowed to political pressure Friday and announced: "President Obama was born in the United States, period."

For more than a year, Trump defined himself by promising to deport 11 million undocumented workers and build a wall along the southern border to keep them out. Then last month, he returned from Mexico and - his rhetoric notwithstanding - softened his stance just enough to call for the immediate expulsion of some 2 million undocumented workers who have committed crimes in the U.S.

It hardly made a ripple in Idaho. As the New York Times' poll analysis FiveThirtyEight unit concluded, the Gem State is holding firm. FiveThirtyEight says

Idaho has a 98.8 percent chance of ending up in the Trump column.

If you want to know why, ask a typical Idaho Republican voter. We did.

We'll call him Bob.

Bob, what do you make of Trump abandoning the birther controversy?

"This was one of the reasons I'm a reluctant Trump supporter. I see some of the things he's done like that. He should have had more facts. Did he not have the facts? Was that why he was going after Obama? Or did he do it just to make a big show out of it?"

It sure looks like he's altered his anti-immigration policy, too. Doesn't that bother you?

"I was never for packing all those 11 million people out. I always thought that was stupid. Make them legal. Give them green cards. Have them pay taxes. Deporting the criminals, that should have been done long ago. That's a crime, not doing that. He's 100 percent right on that. But the part about deporting people who are working and have families? I know some of those people and they're good people."

But it's just not birtherism or immigration. Look at the list of Trump flip-flops "Meet the Press" moderator Chuck Todd compiled Sunday: Taxes for the wealthy. Banning the immigration of Muslims. Raising the minimum wage. The Iraq war. The Libyan intervention. Abortion. Paying for his campaign from his own resources. Accepting Syrian refugees. Arming Japan with nuclear weapons.

"Yes, but you know what? How many of the politicians tell you what you want to hear and then they go to Washington, D.C., and they don't do it? How many times have I voted for a politician like that? Every single time."

If he can change his spots on so many issues, where is Trump's core? Can you trust him on any issue?

"This is as blunt as I can be. I have no choice but to vote for him. I can't trust Hillary Clinton. What do I do? Where do I go? (Libertarian) Gary Johnson? If I vote for him, I'm giving my vote to Hillary."

Is there any Trump flip flop that would change your view?

"I'm a Second Amendment guy."

But you know the polls say 70 percent of the American people want tougher monitoring of who buys and sells guns. They show 57 percent believe military assault weapons should be banned. Universal background checks have the support of 74 percent of the National Rifle Association's membership. Let's say Trump's elected. Do you really trust him not to change his attitude toward gun ownership rights?

"I'm in a corner. She's someone I can't support, period. And I've got the other person there telling me what I want to hear. What do I do?"

Say Trump bends to political expediency. In order to win battleground states, he backs some kind of gun regulation - more background checks or even a limit on magazine capacity - before the election. What then?

"If he did that, boy, I'd be screaming my head off. I'd be doing something."

And how would you vote?

"Gary Johnson."

It's a hell of a way to run a country, isn't it? - M.T.