

Explain this

Randy Stapilus/Ridenbaugh Press

Here is one of the ways this year's presidential campaign is so unusual:

The elected officials from one of the two major parties are split on their nominee, but more than that, it is the in-party supporters to that nominee who will have a much harder time explaining themselves, down the road.

Presidential nominee Donald Trump has divided Republicans nationwide, and no less in the gem state. Of Idaho's five major officials, there's (as this is written) an even split, Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter (who has a position in the Trump campaign) and Representative Raul Labrador sticking with Trump, and Senator Mike Crapo and Representative Mike Simpson in opposition. Senator Jim Risch, reportedly was out of state and apparently not weighed in.

The kind of rejection of one's party nominee Crapo and Simpson have made is rare coming from elected officials in either party, especially those in the upper rungs. I can't recall any similar, after the party nominations were made official, in Idaho in the last half-century. Crapo and Simpson are not the kind, either, to lightly abandon their party; over the years they have been as loyal to the Republican brand as any party loyalist could ask. Something really powerful must have blown them loose. (Neither, I should note, has gone as far as endorsing Democrat Hillary Clinton.)

Crapo cited Trump's "pattern of behavior His repeated actions and comments toward women have been disrespectful, profane and demeaning. I have spent more than two decades working on domestic violence prevention. Trump's most recent excuse of 'locker room talk' is completely unacceptable and is inconsistent with protecting women from abusive, disparaging treatment."

Simpson said he found "his recent comments about women deplorable. In my opinion, he has demonstrated that he is unfit to be President and I cannot support him."

The large and fast-growing record of Trump statements and incidents concerning women offers plenty of backing for those statements. But you have to wonder. For these two to split from Trump, surely there was more than just a collection of statements and incidents, many of them years old.

If you listen to the ideas offered by Idaho's congressional delegation, and its governor, over the years, you get little overlap with Trumpism. (Maybe Idaho's Republican voters saw that in the primary contest, when the state went for Ted Cruz over Trump.)

Trumpism has attracted and closely allied itself with white supremacists and hard core nationalists of the kind Idaho, and many of its top officials, have been trying to shake off for years. Trump's Florida speech Thursday would have gone over well at the old Aryan Nations compound.

Trumpism has no consistent policy. Those Republicans worried about who Hillary Clinton might appoint to the Supreme Court should reflect that no one (likely including Trump) has any idea who the orange whirlwind actually would appoint. Trump on any substantial topic is a spinning wheel; I can point you to 18 distinct changes of position on his hallmark issue – immigration – alone. Conservative? Liberal? Those concepts don't seem to be understood by, and are unimportant to, Trump. Forget about any certainty.

Except this: A strong predisposition to authoritarianism, or more bluntly, an American dictatorship. Republicans no less than Democrats have raised this concern. Congress? The Supreme Court? Unimportant, along with participation by the American people. (He seems no more interested in the states, or in the 10th amendment.) Trump's answer to

all problems and issues, devoid of explanation, is what he said at the Republican National Convention and repeated since: “I alone can fix it.” He alone – no one else. You think the federal government has been too powerful? Wait 'til you get a load of this guy.

This is a Republican who doesn't talk about freedom or liberty or opportunity, but about “safety” and “winning” and “getting tough.” His is the speech of a dictator, not an American politician.

Trump runs directly counter to nearly everything leading Idaho Republicans have said, over generations, that they support. The next time Otter or Labrador tell you how much they love freedom, state's rights and the reputation of Idaho, ask them why they supported Trump. You may find Crapo and Simpson won't have nearly as much trouble with the question.

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