

Idaho can't afford meek and mild Democrats

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What a difference a day makes.

That cliché is fitting regarding Nov. 8's nationwide elections that saw the Republicans retain control of both the U.S. House and Senate and take control of the White House with the election of Donald Trump.

It was the biggest American political upset in decades, and perhaps no one was more surprised than Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

In Idaho, the Democrats lost four legislative seats, including one in the longtime Democratic stronghold of Pocatello. The Democrats also failed to win a single seat on the embattled Bannock County Commission.

Republican Sen. Jim Guthrie's highly publicized affair with another lawmaker seemed to have no impact on his re-election, and fellow Southeast Idaho GOP incumbents Rep. Kelley Packer and Sen. Mark Harris easily brushed aside their Democratic challengers.

Well-known and well-liked Pocatello Democrat Mark Nye nearly lost his state Senate bid to a strong challenge from Republican newcomer Tom Katsilometes.

It seemed that any candidate in Idaho and nationwide with an R behind his name had a noticeable advantage on Election Day. As a result, there will be only 17 Democrats serving in the 105-member Idaho Legislature starting in January.

Our strong advice to the Democrats is to not get too demoralized because of the election's results. Idaho now more than ever needs an opposition party, and we all know that the GOP has been incredibly slow and in many cases unable to solve any of our state's problems.

Idaho's Democrats need to make sure their voices are heard and that they aggressively promote their solutions to Idaho's nationally known education woes and struggling economy.

When the Republicans found themselves with minorities in both houses of Congress and a Democrat in the White House after the 2008 elections, they were anything but defeated and Nov. 8's results clearly show that political fortunes can be reversed.

Idaho's Democrats should not hide under rocks hoping for scraps thrown from the supermajority GOP. We encourage the Democrats to hold press conferences to get the word out about their vision for Idaho, write about their vision often via op-eds in the state's newspapers and stop being meek in their opposition to those on the other side of the aisle.

The Republicans are literally running the country - from here in Idaho to Washington, D.C. If Trump's presidency is anything as chaotic as his run for the White House, American Democrats will have ample opportunity to provide an alternative and likely more sane vision for our nation.

We strongly suggest the Dems refuse to feel sorry for themselves and get to work - especially here in Idaho.

What's interesting is that prior to Nov. 8, many Americans thought we'd have a Democratic president in the White House and possibly a Democratic-controlled Congress.

The GOP was seen as a total mess, made obvious by the frequent and ugly infighting between Trump and other Republican leaders.

The Republicans were as much in disarray as we all saw the Democrats as cohesive - maybe too cohesive.

The results on Election Day shattered that image - for now.

The Democratic Party - especially here in Idaho - needs to keep on keepin' on for all of our sakes.

If there ever were a president who needs to be kept in check it's Trump.

Please, Democrats, don't let us down.