

Cheers & Jeers: Remember us?

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to state Reps. Thyra Stevenson and Mike Kingsley, both R-Lewiston, and Caroline Nilsson Troy, R-Genesee.

What are these three doing voting for House Majority Leader Mike Moyle's plan to give a \$51.2 million tax cut to people who don't need it and won't notice it?

The only reason Moyle even has money to play with is because taxpayers and college students - many of them living in north central Idaho - are propping up the state budget.

When GOP lawmakers finish patting themselves on the back for ramping up school funding, they'll leave behind a system that won't get by without the property tax dollars school patrons are paying to compensate for inadequate state support.

In the district Stevenson and Kingsley represent, Lewiston school patrons provide the fourth highest amount of supplemental tax dollars in the state - \$14 million.

In Troy's backyard, Moscow patrons generate the fifth largest total of supplemental money - \$9.5 million.

Did it escape their attention that they represent two of Idaho's four-year institutions of higher learning - Lewis-Clark State College and the University of Idaho?

State support for Idaho's college students dropped 30.8 percent since the Great Recession - the eighth deepest cuts in the U.S. Even the State Board of Education concedes raising tuition to cover those losses has priced college education beyond the reach of some Idahoans.

Yet Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's budget will certainly lead to a new tuition hike.

Slice another \$51.2 million from the state's treasury and remedying those problems becomes even more difficult.

Tuesday, Stevenson and Troy followed their fellow Republicans on the tax committee and endorsed Moyle's bill.

Thursday, Kingsley joined them in voting for it on the House floor.

Have they forgotten who sent them to Boise?

JEERS ... to state Rep. Greg Chaney, R-Caldwell. After phoning in for instructions from the American Legislative Exchange Council, the legislative sophomore pitched the idea of taking sales tax dollars from any Idaho community that opts to become a sanctuary city.

No Idaho community as yet fits that definition - in which police are barred from enforcing national immigration laws. On the other hand, much of Idaho agriculture - notably its dairy operations in the Magic Valley - depends on the labor of undocumented workers.

Pass Chaney's bill, and here's the potential fallout:

- Lewiston - \$3.4 million.
- Moscow - \$1.5 million.
- Grangeville - \$340,000.
- Orofino - \$320,000.

Two of the largest components of any city's budget are cops and firefighters. So let's get this straight: In order to protect us from undocumented workers, Chaney would hold our public safety ransom.

What would you call that?

Extortion?

CHEERS ... to Rep. Paulette Jordan, D-Plummer.

Every one of the House State Affairs Committee members who voted for Chaney's anti-immigration bill has an ancestor who immigrated to this country.

And the only person in the room who voted no belongs to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe.

"As the only indigenous person in the room, the irony is seeing immigrants having prejudice toward other immigrants, and then putting that prejudice on local counties," Jordan said.

"I fully support sanctuary cities. My ancestors supported immigrants - I see no reason to change. I believe in humanity first."

Good for her.

JEERS ... to Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash. When is she going to stop cheerleading for the Trump administration?

Apparently not when it comes to the White House ban on refugees and immigrants from Muslim-majority nations.

As the Washington Post reported, at least eight Republican senators - including John McCain of Arizona - and 16 House members oppose that policy.

Another 15 GOP senators and 22 Republican House members have at least expressed some reservations about how Trump implemented his executive order. Among them are Washington Republican Reps. Dan Newhouse and Jaime Herrera Beutler.

But when you're the House GOP Conference chairwoman, conscience takes a back seat to following the party line.

"It is the federal government's responsibility to protect the American people, and the Trump administration is following through on that responsibility," McMorris Rodgers said.

New York Times conservative columnist David Brooks has categorized that kind of deference as the GOP's Faustian bargain with Trump: "The deal they've struck with the devil comes at too high a price. It really will cost them their soul."

JEERS ... to Idaho Rep. Heather Scott, R-Blanchard. She's like the burglar who gets probation and then starts cursing the judge.

Last December, Scott accused House leadership of appointing women to committee chairmanships in exchange for sexual favors.

Think of all the reputations she sullied: Not just her immediate target, Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Judy Boyle, R-Midvale, but others such as budget committee Co-Chairwoman Maxine Bell, R-Jerome, and Education Chairwoman Julie VanOrden, R-Pingree, - not to mention some of the legendary committee leaders of the past including the late budget committee Co-Chairwoman Kitty Gurnsey, R-Boise.

Speaker Scott Bedke, R-Oakley, had little choice but to discipline her. He stripped Scott of her committee assignments.

Nearly three weeks of boo-hooing followed, but Scott finally apologized. When she did, Bedke restored her credentials. Not a day transpired before Scott:

- Accused Bedke of singling her out for unusually harsh treatment. Not true. Leaders on both sides of the rotunda have disciplined their troops for behavior far less egregious.
- Bemoaned "overreaching by the House speaker" and called Bedke out for engaging in "unprofessional" behavior. Again, not true. If there is anything absolute in the House, it is the authority of the speaker to make committee assignments and to maintain decorum.
- "I believe this situation may have been used as a political distraction from bigger political issues, ..." Scott said. Well, yes, this episode has been a distraction. But who made the comment in the first place? Who hesitated about apologizing? Who escalated the confrontation by going on a Boise talk radio program?

How much more does Scott expect Bedke and her fellow lawmakers to tolerate? - M.T.