

Cheers & Jeers: Far-out Foreman

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Idaho state Sen. Dan Foreman, R-Moscow. First he wanted to prosecute women who have abortions with first-degree murder.

Now he's done a cannon ball into the climate-change denial pool. That puts him in good company. The House Education Committee airbrushed out of Idaho's public school science standards five paragraphs involving climate change. And when he got an email asking him about it, here's how Foreman responded:

- "The global warming theory is nonsense. The vast majority of credible scientists say so."

Not really. Depending on who you ask, you'll find at least 90 percent of climate scientists agree with the premise that the Earth is getting warmer. Most studies put the number at 97 percent. Some of them work in Foreman's backyard - at the University of Idaho.

- "In fact, there is mounting evidence that the planet is starting to cool."

Says who? Last year was the warmest on record, shattering the previous high set in 2015, which eclipsed the 2014 record.

- "Do you remember the discovered and well-publicized emails from those scientists in which they admitted global warming was a hoax - part of an agenda to grow government in the name of saving the almighty environment?"

No. What we remember are allegations about these emails surfacing on the eve of a climate change summit. But after the case was investigated by eight committees, no misconduct was found.

- "The left wing has created a new religion and it's called 'the environment.' I wish they would pay more attention to real religion."

Where is the conflict between environmental stewardship and religion? Pope Francis certainly doesn't see one. In fact, the pope calls allowing the planet's climate to deteriorate a "sin against God."

- "Idaho is a conservative state and therefore has a conservative Legislature. You should not be surprised we will not support liberal constructs and obsessions."

When the Boise State University Public Policy Survey asked, 72 percent of Idahoans told them climate change is real, 81.8 percent said they were concerned about it and 83.9 percent said human behavior was responsible for some if not all of it.

As the Tribune's William L. Spence noted, Foreman has decided following the time-tested rules for a freshman - sit down, shut up, listen and keep your ego in check - "got boring real quick."

It shows, too.

JEERS ... to U.S. Sens. Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, both R-Idaho. They don't want you to know how unpopular President Donald Trump's education secretary - Betsy DeVos - is with their constituents.

So they're playing hide-the-ball with a fairly routine statistic. When the Idaho Statesman's Bill Dentzer asked how the telephone and mail count in their offices was going, both clammed up.

"It isn't available and we're not going to release those numbers," said Risch's chief of staff, former state Sen. John Sandy.

"We will not release the call and mail tallies regarding the DeVos nomination because the precise number of Idahoans cannot be determined due to outside area codes and those who did not leave contact information," said Robert Sumner, Crapo's press secretary.

Congressional offices keep detailed records about who contacts them. They use it to identify what topics resonate with which of their constituents. And, when it serves their purpose, they release the tallies as a demonstration of support for what they're doing.

Here's a bet: Crapo and Risch both voted to confirm DeVos on Feb. 6 despite their own constituents urging them to reject her nomination.

How do we know? Because one of Crapo's staffers spilled the beans. As reported by the Ontario, Ore., Argus Observer, Crapo's regional director, Bryan Ricker, told the Payette County commissioners the calls were running 19-to-1 against DeVos.

"We are getting a lot of calls about the cabinet picks," Ricker said. "DeVos is the one we're hearing the most about ... and I think 95 percent are against her."

JEERS ... to Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash.

She's under pressure from constituents who are riled up at Trump and the GOP Congress.

At least her office doors remained open.

Last week, Risch's chief of staff, Sandy, locked the doors of the Idaho Republican's downtown Boise office.

But McMorris Rodgers has put up another kind of barricade - delay.

As the Spokesman-Review's Kip Hill reported, the 5th District congresswoman's staff lined up constituents protesting against repealing

Obamacare and met with them two at a time.

No wonder McMorris Rodgers and other shell-shocked Republicans are acquiring a new nickname: "snowflakes."

CHEERS ... to former Idaho House Democratic Leader John Rusche of Lewiston. When someone loses a re-election campaign, there's a strong temptation to retreat to private life.

But in Ruche's case, that would be the public's loss. When it comes to health care policy, most roads in this state lead to him.

He's a retired physician, a former health insurance executive and during his dozen years in the Legislature was in the thick of Idaho's health care policy debates.

So Rusche agreed to once again answer the call of public service. He will remain on the YourHealth Idaho health insurance exchange board - a panel on which he has served since 2013.

The Senate Commerce and Human Resources Committee unanimously supported Rusche's confirmation. It now goes to the full Senate.

JEERS ... to Rep. Paul Shepherd, R-Riggins. He wasn't around last week when the House Transportation Committee put politics ahead of reality - and refused to even consider a temporary

boost in Idaho's fuel taxes. A cold, wet winter and spring floods have left Idaho motorists dodging potholes, fractured pavement and compromised roadbeds.

With a nickel increase in the fuel tax, the state could have worked with about \$49 million more a year.

But Shepherd was on board Tuesday when Transportation Committee Chairman Joe Palmer, R-Meridian, proposed his solution: Wean the Idaho State Police from the \$17 million it draws from fuel taxes.

Talk about a political stunt. Phased in over five years, it will yield a mere \$3 million next year to address the current problem. But over time, it would cut 42 percent of ISP's patrol budget. You know where the replacement dollars will come from - the same account that's supposed to educate your children.

The Riggins Republican voted aye. Who needs a highway patrol if there are fewer highways to patrol? - M.T.