

# Not your business

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## **Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to Rep. Vito Barbieri, R-Dalton Gardens. He's trying to pull down the shades over Idaho's Legislature.

Not that he needs a lot of help.

You're not entitled to know how a legislator earns his living. So you're never completely sure whether he's acting in your best interests - or his.

Idaho has no independent ethics commission watchdogging legislative misbehavior. The politicians police themselves.

You're locked out of the House and Senate caucus meetings - where the real action often occurs.

The Open Meetings Law does not apply to the Legislature. Your access to committee meetings is a matter of privilege, not right.

One tool you have is Idaho's Public Records Act. Under it, public officials - including legislators - must hand over email and other communications upon request.

That opens a window on bills legislators are considering and who they're consulting. For example, the Idaho Wildlife Federation used a public records request to document how Senate Resources and Environment Committee Chairman Steve Bair, R-Blackfoot, discussed putting some of Idaho's choicest hunting opportunities up for bid with an advocate of the so-called auction tags, eastern Idaho businessman Doug Sayer.

Since most bills clear the House and Senate without much debate, those emails also can shed a much-needed light on what motivated lawmakers to act.

Now Barbieri wants to remove the Legislature from much of the Public Records Act. Kept under seal would be communications among legislators, between lawmakers and staffers as well as between legislators and private citizens.

Any idea what Barbieri is trying to keep from you?

JEERS ... to Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter. The people of Washington might be interested to learn that the champion of states' rights has just sicced the hydra of President Donald Trump's Justice Department on them.

In a Jan. 30 letter to Trump, Otter included this sentiment: "Among the most pressing concerns facing Idaho, both from the criminal and public health standpoints, is the utter lack of consistency displayed by the Obama administration in enforcement of federal marijuana laws. In that respect, Idaho is a virtual island of compliance, and we are paying the price."

Keep in mind, Otter is not bemoaning some activist court ruling, an obscure bureaucratic regulation or even an act of the Legislature. The voters of Washington - and later Oregon, California and Nevada, among others - legalized recreational marijuana use, sales and cultivation.

Look no further; that is the gold standard of states' rights. President Barack Obama's administration respected that choice - within limits.

Now Otter is urging the federal government to impose its will on the citizens of these states.

Remember the former lieutenant governor - who in his capacity as acting governor in 1987 - resisted a federal mandate raising Idaho's drinking age to 21?

Or the Idaho governor who bemoaned federal interference in the "collective judgment of the people born to this land" in 2010, in 2011, 2012 and 2013?

How about the state leader who signed an executive order in 2011 commanding his legion of administrators to block implementation of Obamacare?

Is this the same one who in 2014 gave local cops permission to refuse to help federal agents enforce national firearms laws - and resorted to the federal courts, whether it was resisting same-sex marriage or a sage grouse recovery plan?

And which GOP gubernatorial candidate in 1978 told Reason magazine: "If a person, of his own free will, wants to use marijuana, I question whether the government has any propriety in telling him he can't"?

Yep. That was Butch Otter. Whatever happened to him?

CHEERS ... to Lewiston Mayor Jim Kleeburg and the city council.

As a rule of thumb, if a politician wants to retain his job, he keeps his head down and avoids unnecessary controversy.

Case in point: Nez Perce County Commissioners Doug Havens and Douglas Zenner dodging whether to endorse the March 14 Lewiston High School bond.

But it looks as if Kleeburg and his fellow councilors are going to put themselves on the line. Monday, they'll vote on a resolution of support for the \$59.8 million bond issue.

As the Tribune's Joel Mills reported, Councilors Bob Blakey, Cari Miller, Jesse Maldonado and Mayor Pro Tem Mike Collins expressed support for the bond. Councilors Ryan "R.J." Johnson and Ged Randall take a dimmer view.

What's good for the school district is good for the city - and vice versa.

Kleeburg and company are putting the community ahead of their own narrow political interests. Good for them.

JEERS ... to House Majority Leader Mike Moyle, R-Star. He just can't keep his fingers off money that's sorely needed to pay for Idaho's public schools and higher education.

Now he wants to drain about \$17 million out of the general fund to essentially pay for highway repairs. He's taking a circuitous route. Transportation funds that today support the Idaho State Police would go toward transportation. . ISP would replace those dollars from the general fund.

This does nothing but set a lousy precedent. It's a pittance in terms of addressing the needs of Idaho's roads and bridges - which still runs about \$200 million short of meeting its maintenance each year.

A key reason for that is lawmakers have been cowed by the long-haul trucking industry, which enjoys a huge subsidy at the public's expense.

Rather than confront that head-on and solve the problem, Moyle would rather play games.

JEERS ... to Senate Education Committee Chairman Dean Mortimer, R-Idaho Falls. Contrast his imperious demeanor with that of his counterpart, House Education Committee Chairwoman Julie VanOrden, R-Pingree.

Nobody in Idaho is going to enact a state-funded early childhood education program - at least not in the near future. But Idaho is among only six states that refuse to help young children who are not prepared for kindergarten.

At least VanOrden's committee took time to hear a diverse group of early childhood education advocates - among them, Lt. Gov. Brad Little, Bank of Idaho Chairman Park Price and Canyon County Prosecutor Bryan Taylor..

But when the group got to Mortimer's committee, he offered 20 minutes and kept pressing the group to move along.

Give Mortimer this: He's no slave to subtlety. - M.T.