

Trillhaase's editorial ignored the facts

Raul Labrador/Idaho congressman for the TribI don't pay attention to Marty Trillhaase's editorials for the same reason most people in Idaho don't pay attention to them. They're not informative, they're not entertaining and, all too often, they're inaccurate enough to be labeled fiction. But on June 9, Trillhaase sunk to a new low and I feel the need to respond.

According to Trillhaase, I'm "inching toward" using my congressional office to "subsidize" my campaign for governor. That's a pretty serious charge, so you would think Trillhaase would have some serious evidence to back it up. Furthermore, you would think Trillhaase would contact my office in advance to make sure his allegations are grounded in basic facts. Sadly, Trillhaase never contacted my office, ignoring a standard practice of journalism and breaking a promise he made to my office in 2014. So, once again, Trillhaase found himself in a situation all too familiar to his editorial practices - not having any idea what he's talking about.

Trillhaase criticizes me for two things. First, on June 2, I sent an e-newsletter to my constituents about my work to help Idaho's veterans and others needing assistance with the federal government. I'm very proud of the work my team does on behalf of the people of Idaho and I frequently make this point as part of my e-newsletter. The problem, according to Trillhaase, is that my e-newsletter was "replete with [Labrador's] picture and the seal of the U.S. House."

But here's the thing: Trillhaase didn't mention that all of my e-newsletters - going back to 2011, my first year in office - contain my picture and the U.S. Seal. So this isn't a new thing.

This doesn't have anything to do with the governor's race, which I announced for in May 2017 - six and a half years after I started the practice. Using my picture and the seal is completely consistent with the House rules, and is a standard practice by nearly all members of Congress. Trillhaase knows that, and never criticized my predecessors for doing it. And yet, he cast aspersions on me anyway. Why? Who knows, but he must do better.

The second thing Trillhaase criticized me for was that, according to him, I recently changed the settings of my congressional website to receive input from people outside my congressional district. As Trillhaase tells it, I changed the settings around the time of my announcement for governor so that people living outside the 1st District no longer received an automatic response saying I couldn't accept their input.

Trillhaase based this insight on a column written by two left-of-center political commentators who never took the time to contact my office before writing their column.

But if Trillhaase had contacted my office in advance - as any responsible person in his position would do - we could have told him the backstory: Years ago, people in the 2nd District were complaining about receiving the automatic message. So we asked our email software provider to change the settings so we could accept emails from everyone. They made that change. While it's possible others have received the automatic message since then, that's a software issue that is

outside our control. The point is, this "recent" change was made years ago and has nothing to do with the governor's race.

It's no secret Trillhaase isn't a fan of mine. He's a left-wing political commentator and I'm a conservative public official. But while Trillhaase has a right to his opinions, he owes a duty to the public to base those opinions on actual facts. He needs to be more responsible.

When people hear about my staff's successful casework, it inspires others to contact my office. It gives me an opportunity to help even more Idahoans. Case in point: Just a few weeks ago, Don McGee was visiting his uncle in St. Maries and read a letter to the editor written by an Idaho veteran thanking me for helping with an issue he was having with the VA. McGee contacted my office on behalf of his uncle, an Idaho veteran. From there, my caseworker, Bev Jensen, was able to meet this Idaho hero's request and get him end-of-life hospice care.

My dedicated congressional staffers are making tangible improvements to the lives of Idaho's citizens and, especially, its veterans. While Trillhaase might not like it, my staff and I will continue to do our best to represent and respond to the needs of the people of Idaho.

If you or someone you know needs help with any federal agency, I encourage you to contact my office. My team and I are always available.

As for Trillhaase, he needs to do better. If he can't write editorials grounded in basic facts and dedicated to actually helping the people of our community, he should make way for someone who can.

Labrador, R-Idaho, is serving his fourth term in the U.S House of Representatives.