

# See nitwits on parade in the Idaho Senate

Jim Fisher

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The fact it happened April 1 was pure coincidence. Any day can be April Fools' Day in the Idaho Legislature.

What made this one especially embarrassing - to repeat the word used by Sen. Joe Stegner, R-Lewiston - was that the fools in question weren't in the House, but in the Senate, and they were not ordinary members, but the leaders who form the State Affairs Committee.

On this day, these august personages approved, back to back, two so-called memorial resolutions - junk mail to Congress, in other words - that contradict each other.

The first, sent by the House and originating with Rep. Dick Harwood of St. Maries and seven other Republican zanies including Paul Shepherd of Riggins, warns Uncle Sam not to mess with mighty Idaho. Declaring that "Idaho hereby claims sovereignty under the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States," the resolution includes the assertion that "Congress has inappropriately delegated its monetary authority to the private federal reserve bank, thus failing to protect and provide a sound monetary system as defined and mandated by the Constitution of the United States, forcing an unstable currency on us resulting in the past, and the current, economic perils."

It goes on to direct the federal government "to cease and desist, effective immediately," encroachments on Idaho's sovereignty.

Harwood told the committee those encroachments are often accompanied by enticements, usually in the form of money.

"We've been enticed over the years," he said. "This memorial sends a message to Congress to quit enticing us."

After approving the resolution, the committee moved on to pass another begging Congress for - you guessed it - an enticement. Sponsored by Rep. Jeff Thompson, R-Idaho Falls, it asks the federal government to send Idaho money for a medical school program.

With two votes, committee members embodied what American writer Bernard DeVoto said had long been the principal message from purportedly rugged Westerners to the federal government:

"Get out and give us more money."

The second resolution passed unanimously, but some critics of the first pointed out what committee members had just embraced.

"Irony," Boise Democrat Kate Kelly called it.

"Hypocrisy," added Lewiston's Stegner, who said he found things in Harwood's resolution "silly" - "particularly blanket statements that say the United States currency is somehow weak, and that the Federal Reserve system is a failure."

"Those kinds of statements couldn't be further from the truth," he added, "and how could anyone in good conscience support a resolution that makes false and inaccurate statements? It's an embarrassment."

This embarrassment passed the House 51-17, with the help of Ken Roberts, R-Donnelly, and Tom Trail, R-Moscow. Anyone care to bet it will meet a different fate in the Senate? - J.F.