

Q & A with Jeff Ward/Reagan Republicans

Q — What's the difference between a Reagan Republican and other county Republicans?

A — Pretty much the regular Republicans are ones that have joined our club. It's not an ideological distinction. We were originally thinking about forming a 3rd Pachyderm Club but it's restrictive in terms of endorsing candidates and participating in campaigns. Our focus is much more party building than informational (like Pachyderm). A second goal is education and training campaign managers, phone bankers, mail stuffers, door-bell ringers, to run political campaigns. Also, we want to develop people who can help candidates at a moment's notice. We also want an observational goal in terms of watching candidates, incumbents, issues, and having a bank of information ready for prospective candidates.

Q — What do you say to individuals who don't think Republicans or Democrats should be involved in nonpartisan political elections?

A — The vast majority of people working and running in those elections are Republicans or Democrats. People involved in politics have some partisan attachment (to a political party). We saw, particularly in the Coeur d'Alene council, that Democrats were active in promoting their candidates. What nonpartisan means is that you don't put a moniker on your ballot. But the people working in the races are the ones also working in partisan races. Sometimes local issues coincide with (political) issues that are important to the different parties.

Q — What's your reaction to the outcome of the municipal races that Reagan Republicans were involved in?

A — In Post Falls, we're happy that Betty Henderson got elected. Our endorsement didn't have much influence because she was such a good candidate. We had a lot of effect in the Coeur d'Alene races. We came in late. We endorsed Jim Brannon and Betty Henderson. We were a month out. Brannon had not really had the apparatus in place to run a strong race. In terms of money, he was way behind. In terms of volunteers, it was slow. We felt we could have an impact in the race. Jim Brannon got more votes than any other challenger in Coeur d'Alene city history. The strategy of partisanizing this race was effective in dramatically increasing turnout. Jim's much further along than he would be if we hadn't gotten involved.

Q — Was the strategy to help Jim Brannon or to defeat a well-known Democrat, Mike Kennedy?

A — We were out to help a well-known Republican. We endorsed 3 candidates in City Council races and all three were Republican. We endorsed Betty Henderson and Jim Brannon first. There were questions we had to discuss. Our board (of 9 individuals) has to be unanimous to endorse anyone.

Q — What do you think of Walt Minnick?

A — The key issue for us is the fact that the first vote he took on the floor of the House. He voted for Nancy Pelosi. That's the biggest issue we have with Walt Minnick. Walt Minnick could have voted for someone else but he didn't. By his assent this whole change of abuse that is coming down the pike, from my view as a Republican, scares the vast majority of

Republicans and Independents. Walt Minnick said he would support Idaho values in the Congress. A lot of Republicans and Independents supported that. His credibility dramatically decreased when he voted for Nancy Pelosi.

Q — Duane Rasmussen quit the club over its endorsement of Dan Gookin because he felt that Gookin wasn't a diehard Republican? What happened there?

A — He's a member in good standing now. There was never any long-term fallout from that. Duane wanted to be sure that the club he belonged to made sure that we endorsed true Republicans. He met with Dan Gookin. He's (now) convinced that Dan Gookin is a Republican.

Q — When did you form and how many members do you now have?

A — We formed in late July. Our first meeting was the first Thursday in August. We have about 80 members.

Q — What's your next goal?

A — The election was a diversion. We didn't plan to be that involved in specific races. Our focus now is going to be on campaign training. We learned a lot in this race about door-belling and running phone banks. I don't foresee us, as a club, being directly involved in specific campaigns, other than filling in on an on-call basis. We want to be a ready force. My prediction is that we won't endorse in the GOP congressional primary because we have board members who support each front-running candidate now (Vaughn Ward and Ken Roberts).

Q — Would you like to see Bill Sali run again?

A — I'm for healthy competition in races. I'm not saying I would support anyone. It's an open race. If he has something to add to it, that would be great. He would be a little late getting into the game. Both Vaughn Ward and Ken Roberts have a lot of support now. Sali's former supporters have already committed. His speech the other night at our meeting was strong