

# Profligates

**Marty Trillhaase /Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to David Estes, chairman of Taxpayers Against Unfair Taxation and candidate for Nez Perce County commissioner. This self-appointed arbiter of government waste doesn't mind igniting a wad of your tax dollars.

Exhibit 1: TAUT doesn't like the city of Lewiston using \$800,000 from a sanitation fund surplus as a bridge loan for the \$3.56 million library project. Estes is launching an initiative to stop the city from using fees meant for one purpose on something else.

At your expense, staffers at the city attorney and clerk offices are processing TAUT's initiative documents and preparing ballot titles. If, within 75 days, Estes' group lines up the signatures of 374 registered voters, the measure will get on the Nov. 6 general election ballot - which means Nez Perce County Clerk Patty Weeks may have to spend more of your money on a longer ballot and legal notices.

Whether the ballot measure is from the left or the right, Idaho's Supreme Court has been consistent: Local initiatives can't trump state law - in this case, just about everything an Idaho city or county does is spelled out in Idaho Code.

And no initiative can be used to overturn a management decision - whether that's passing a budget or transferring funds from one account to another.

Judges can't enjoin legally flawed initiatives from getting on the ballot. Only after something passes and becomes law do the courts intervene.

So who is watching out for the taxpayers of Lewiston and Nez Perce County?

Certainly not Estes and his group.

JEERS ... to the Association of Washington Business and the Washington State Farm Bureau. If not for their deep pockets, anti-tax initiative promoter Tim Eyman might be out of business.

Eyman is the force behind Initiative 1053, which two years ago locked Washington lawmakers into a cut-only approach to budget balancing. I-1053 requires a two-thirds majority in the House and Senate to pass any tax increase.

Washington's constitution says nothing about requiring super majorities for anything other than passing bonds and allowing gambling. Everything else, from budgets to the death penalty, is suitable for a simple majority and the governor's signature.

Eyman's measure also frustrates Washington's ability to hold tax incentives accountable. As a Pew Center study recently noted, most tax breaks fall far short of delivering the economic progress they promise. A few states, including Washington, are beginning to scrutinize which tax measures are effective and which are not. But repealing any of them, under Eyman's measures, also would require a two-thirds legislative vote.

Time was running out on I-1053. After two years, lawmakers could suspend it by a simple majority vote.

So Eyman is back with a renewal measure. Since he's having trouble rounding up the signatures necessary to put the measure before voters at the Nov. 6 election, he needs to hire professional signature collectors. By some accounts, he'll need more than \$1 million.

Enter the AWB and Farm Bureau.

No longer can Eyman claim the mantle of grass-roots organizer. He's just another tool of the special interests.

CHEERS ... to Jimmy Farris. A Democratic candidate for Idaho's 1st Congressional District seat, Farris won't debate his May 15 primary opponent, Cynthia Clinkingbeard, on Idaho Public Television.

Typically, that would draw a dart. But Clinkingbeard has a history of bipolar disorder. She faces three felony counts of aggravated assault and a weapons charge after Boise cops said she threatened workers at a Boise Staples store with a handgun.

So Farris had to choose: A newcomer who needs all the help he can get introducing himself to Idaho voters, does he expose Clinkingbeard to a live, statewide televised debate? Doing so could be painful, if not cruel.

Said Farris campaign coordinator Toni Sutton: "Mental illness is a big issue; that's just not something that you capitalize on."

JEERS ... to former Sen. Rod Beck, R-Boise, who pushed and poked until Idaho closed its GOP primary to anyone who wasn't willing to publicly declare his affiliation with the Republican Party.

His latest victims: The 65 men and women who work for the Idaho Legislative Services Office. They work with Republicans and Democrats. Beck's handiwork boxed them in. Vote and they undermine their independence. Don't vote and they miss the election that counts in a one-party state.

So most of them, including Director Jeff Youtz, are voluntarily abstaining. Don't get the wrong idea: Youtz isn't whining. But in this environment, even not voting can be taken the wrong way. Better to explain lest someone draw the wrong conclusions.

"If the nonpartisan LSO staff participates in the upcoming primary election, individual staff members will for the first time be declaring publicly a political affiliation, and these voter registration lists will be an easily accessible public record," Youtz wrote. "I believe this would fundamentally change the perception of our staff by legislators, and could affect the working relationship between staff and legislators."

So some of the best-informed and least ideological voters in this state have just been driven out of the primary election. Just what Beck wanted.

CHEERS ... to the teachers, staff and students at McSorley Elementary School. They've launched the Lewiston School District's first autism awareness campaign. Autism strikes one of every 88 children in the United States, more than all juvenile AIDS, diabetes or cancer cases combined.

Involving kids who are challenged with autism with their classmates broadens everybody's perspective.

CHEERS ... to Washington state Sen. Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville, and Rep. Joe Schmick, R-Colfax.

They are among a handful of state lawmakers with a perfect voting record.

In the past two years, Schoesler has cast all 1,081 roll call votes.

That puts him among only five state senators.

Schmick is among 25 House members with a perfect record. He cast all 1,224 roll call votes.

His seat mate, Rep. Susan Fagan, R-Pullman, missed 26 votes.- M.T.