

# Veto Vito

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to state Rep. Vito Barbieri, R-Dalton Gardens. Here's what Barbieri thinks of state government's primary obligation - the education of your children: "If you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and God, then pull your kids out of that Godless institution."

Barbieri deliberated over this quip, wrote it down and published it on his website.

When his Democratic challenger, Cheryl Stransky, also of Dalton Gardens, pressed him about it during a debate, he didn't retreat: "My words exactly."

Then he launched into a call for a tax credit to "allow an alternative to this public school system that is certainly serving a purpose, but there are questions about the curriculum, and that's what I'm concerned with."

Idaho's Constitution binds legislators to "establish and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public, free common schools."

In that same charter, Idaho's Founding Fathers were determined to keep religion and public education separate: " ... No teacher or student of any such institution shall ever be required to attend or participate in any religious service whatsoever. No sectarian or religious tenets or doctrines should ever be taught in public schools. ..."

But what would you expect from a lawmaker who made his name promoting the discredited idea that a state could defy federal authority through nullification - a vestige of the old Confederacy and an issue the Civil War settled for all time.

Considering the contempt he holds for the U.S. Constitution, why should it shock anyone when he trashes the Idaho Constitution?

There's just one problem: As a member of the Idaho Legislature, he has sworn an oath to uphold both.

CHEERS ... to Idaho Senate President Brent Hill, R-Rexburg. He may have spared Idaho's counties, cities and schools a financial meltdown.

What Idaho's titans of industry want from the Legislature, they typically get. What they want now is the elimination of the property tax they pay on equipment - worth about \$133 million to \$143 million.

Repeal would pull all that money from local governments - especially in areas with huge industrial plants.

The city of Lewiston, for instance, would lose 4.2 percent of its property tax revenues while Nez Perce County would forfeit nearly 17 percent.

Speaking to a Boise business forum, Hill said repeal should come gradually - over six years - and only during periods of economic growth when government could absorb the loss.

Hill also wants the state to replace the dollars cities, counties, schools and other local districts would lose. While an improvement, it means resources Idaho needs to rebuild its schools, universities, state agencies and social safety net from the ravages of the Great Recession will be diverted elsewhere.

That is, unless someone presses Idaho's businesses to name a tax they're willing to pay.

JEERS ... to Melaleuca Inc. CEO and President Frank VanderSloot. Thanks to him, you might conclude GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney has weighed in on the Luna laws - schools Superintendent Tom Luna's scheme to gut teacher collective bargaining rights, replace steady teacher pay increases with year-to-year bonuses and steer your hard-earned tax dollars to his cronies in the online instruction industry.

To dissuade voters from repealing all three on Nov. 6, VanderSloot has hit on a new tactic. He's running a radio spot of Romney saying:

"Now these are bold initiatives and they're going to produce better outcomes for our parents and teachers and students. ... Whenever anyone dares to offer a new idea, the unions protest the loudest. ..."

How much do you want to bet Romney hasn't read the Luna laws? If he had, why didn't he cut a current radio spot saying so?

Instead, VanderSloot has appropriated a speech Romney gave in April about the imminent recall election of Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker. A month later, C-SPAN aired a few seconds of it during an interview with American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten.

She pivoted from Romney's words to point out the GOP nominee had fabricated a quote from the late AFT President Albert Shanker.

Does contributing at least \$1 million to Romney's campaign give VanderSloot the right to quote him out of context? As great a disservice as VanderSloot's misleading ad does the Idaho voter, it does Romney no favor.

In Idaho, it sets him up as a federal usurper of states' rights. No president or presidential candidate has ever interfered with an Idaho ballot measure before.

Plus it could undermine him in Ohio - where a year ago, 61 percent of the voters repealed Republican Gov. John Kasich's attempt to roll back public employee's collective bargaining rights.

---

What happens if those Ohio voters learn Romney disagrees with them and supports trashing workers' collective bargaining rights - albeit in another state?

Is this how VanderSloot treats his friends? Makes you wonder how he'd handle everyone else, doesn't it?

---

JEERS ... to Clarkston City Councilor Terry Beadles. To hear him tell it, Asotin County Fire District Chairman Ken Klug had insulted the good name of Clarkston and leaned toward "borderline bigotry."

Klug was responding to Mayor Kathleen Warren's suggestion to re-establish a mutual aid agreement. He might have done without suggesting Clarkston was reaching out for help. But if Warren was looking for cooperation, Klug certainly offered it: "We would welcome any discussion you would entertain as long as mutual aid can be clearly defined. ... We are aware that the city of Lewiston has invited your city to participate in the regional Emergency Medical Service system. This could be a logical first step to our negotiations as our board believes that all agreements between emergency providers impact service delivery in the region." How is that hostile? Is Beadles being over-sensitive or just looking for a fight? - M.T.