

# Two-title Thyra

*Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune*

JEERS ... to State Rep. Thyra Stevenson, R-Lewiston. Or is it Lewiston City Councilor Thyra Stevenson? Stevenson refuses to loosen her grip on her other government perch.

How is that working out?

Ensnconced in Boise, Stevenson phoned in her participation at Monday's grueling five-hour-long city council meeting. It was noteworthy for the councilor's apparent confusion. Relying on a mere audio link left her struggling to keep up.

Perhaps self-awareness was never Stevenson's strong point. How else to explain this pronouncement from the indispensable Thyra?

Lewiston suffers from a public relations problem, she says. Residents don't feel like they're getting what they voted for.

Where did she conjure up that remarkable idea?

From looking in the mirror?

To represent the people of Nez Perce and Lewis counties in the state Capitol, the taxpayers of Idaho are paying Stevenson \$16,438 a year. Add another \$122 for every day the Legislature is in session to cover expenses. For a typical 80-day session, that comes close to \$10,000.

Throw in getting reimbursed for her travel home each weekend.

Plus medical insurance, life insurance and state retirement benefits.

How is Stevenson serving those constituents by staying up late Monday night struggling to follow the details of a Lewiston City Council meeting?

To represent the people of Lewiston, Stevenson picks up another \$520 a month - plus some state retirement benefits. Voters in the city elected her to, at minimum, show up - in person - to council meetings and to be available when they try to locate her. How does she accomplish all that while serving on the time-consuming legislative budget committee?

When Stevenson says Lewiston isn't getting what it voted for, she knows of what she speaks.

CHEERS ... to Lewiston's teachers. Among the many flaws of Idaho schools Superintendent Tom Luna's since-repealed overhaul package was a merit pay plan that shabbily treated classroom aides, secretaries, custodians and cooks.

Totally ignored was the secretary who serves as her school's ambassador to every patron who enters the door.

Or the bus driver who offers that extra assurance to a youngster beginning her school day or congratulates a student taking his sterling report card home.

The janitor who compassionately deals with a sick child.

Or the teacher's aide who patiently helps a few second-graders grasp how to read.

All of them got zilch from Luna's merit pay - in spite of the fact that school administrators sought to steer him in a different direction. Only teachers got a bonus, assuming they worked in a school building where students performed well on a standardized test.

Lewiston's teachers stepped up. Educators at three schools donated a portion of their checks toward the school staff.

Teachers recognize their profession is a collaborative endeavor, not a competitive enterprise. Unfortunately, the man elected to lead Idaho education does not.

JEERS ... to Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho. Isn't he the last politician you'd expect to be on a congressional junket? But there he was, getting ferried about on a CODEL - shorthand for congressional delegation - trip throughout the Middle East.

CODELs typically mean flying on a U.S. government jet, staying in expensive hotels, enjoying good meals and bringing along congressional staffers. It isn't cheap. Just the kind of thing the Tea Party hates.

As the Idaho Statesman's Dan Popkey reported, Labrador left the country on Jan. 4 with five fellow Republicans to visit Turkey, Israel, Cyprus, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco and Spain.

The outing was set up by the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, whose chairman, Darrell Issa, R-Calif., wanted to review embassy security. Issa asked that Labrador attend.

Congressional travel gets an unfair rap; you want members of Congress to know something of the world and each other. But isn't Labrador the fellow who is so serious about cutting government spending that he voted against raising the nation's debt ceiling? Besides, he's no longer on Issa's committee. Labrador has been assigned to the Judiciary committee, where he hopes to pass immigration reform. Labrador has no more need of a field inspection of embassy security than any of the other 435 members of Congress.

But how else was he going to see Turkey or Morocco on a lowly congressman's salary?

JEERS ... to state Rep. Ron Mendive, R-Coeur d'Alene. Week 2 of the Idaho Legislature. Time for some really inappropriate, misogynistic comment from a member of the Idaho House.

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Attending an American Civil Liberties Union-Idaho legislative preview breakfast presentation, the freshman Republican posed this question: If the ACLU supports a woman's right to choose to have an abortion, shouldn't it support her right to be a prostitute?

His remark drew "audible gasps" from the audience. It should have been Mendive's first clue,

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ACLU Executive Director Monica Hopkins explained that abortion is a woman's right under the Constitution while prostitution is a crime. That should have been his second.

The fact is many prostitutes are victims of human trafficking. GOP Caucus Chairman John Vander Woude, R-Meridian, distanced himself from the remark.

Clues three and four whizzed right by.

"Actually, I grew up in Kellogg, and the reality is there used to be brothels in Wallace," Mendive told the Spokesman-Review. "That was a career choice - no one forced them in that."

In a Legislature that only last year tried to impose a mandatory vaginal ultrasound on women seeking abortions or to undermine contraception coverage in health insurance policies, Mendive will find himself right at home.

Any bets what Week 3 will bring? - M.T.