

EDITORIAL Enablers

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to the University of Idaho. The UI signed disgraced former Sen. Larry Craig to speak at its Idaho Falls satellite campus commencement Thursday.

Craig gets to rehabilitate his image. But what do the UI students get?

Lessons in concealment? When he was arrested in June 2007 in a Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport gay sex sting operation, Craig said nothing. Two months later, when he pleaded guilty to a charge of disturbing the peace, Craig still kept it quiet. Three weeks later, Roll Call broke the story.

How to lie? With a scandal swirling around him, Craig announced his "intent to resign" on Sept. 1. But as Roll Call later reported, Craig "reshaped my statement a little bit" in order to later wiggle out of the resignation.

How to undermine your constituents? Senior Republicans stripped Craig of his leadership posts. His influence shriveled. Had he quit early, Idaho could have started over with a more effective freshman senator.

How to prevaricate? When the Senate Ethics Committee challenged the propriety of Craig spending \$217,000 of campaign cash on his court case, Craig said it was none of the panel's affair - he was on personal business in Minneapolis.

When the Federal Elections Commission asked the same question, Craig argued the FEC had no quarrel with him because he was on official business in Minneapolis.

If Craig wants redemption, let him begin with a long-overdue public apology. As long as institutions such as the UI continue to enable him, that's something he never will do.

JEERS ... to the Latah County Republican Central Committee.

It just censured its chairman, Walter Steed, for standing up for civil rights.

Steed, who sits on the Moscow City Council, joined in a unanimous vote to ban discrimination on the job, in housing or in public accommodations on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

That violates Latah County's intolerant GOP party line.

Just how small is that GOP tent becoming?

JEERS ... to former state Sen. Nicole LeFavour, D-Boise. Last year, she voluntarily left office to wage an unsuccessful race against Congressman Mike Simpson. Now the ex-four-term legislator wants \$155 a week in unemployment compensation.

Senate President Pro Tem Brent Hill, R-Rexburg, rightly denied the claim.

LeFavour is gaming the system. The Legislature is public service. It's not a job. With her background - a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Berkeley, a master's from the University of Montana, eight years in the Idaho Legislature and at least some success in raising campaign cash for a congressional campaign - you'd think LeFavour could find one.

CHEERS ... to the Washington Alliance for Gun Responsibility. Even though Washington pollster Stuart Elway says 79 percent of Washington's registered voters back the idea, universal background checks for gun purchases stalled in the Legislature,

So the alliance is taking its battle to the ballot. If it secures the more than 250,000 signatures needed, the alliance will first compel the 2014 Legislature to reconsider the matter. If lawmakers fail to act, the question will go to voters in November of that year.

JEERS ... to the unnamed staffer working for state Sen. Mike Hewitt, R-Walla Walla, who displayed a shocking lack of empathy toward victims of discrimination.

Hewitt is among 11 senators who want to permit discrimination against gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people under the fig leaf of religious freedom.

Seattle resident Jay Castro called Hewitt's office and asked what rural gays are supposed to do if the only person selling gas or groceries refuses to do business with them.

According to the Huffington Post, the staffer replied: "Gay people can just grow their own food."

CHEERS ... to Sandra L. Lee of the Lewiston Tribune. She's retiring after 41 years.

Lee is that rarest of commodities, a hometown journalist in an impermanent world.

That's four decades chronicling the foibles and triumphs of people from every facet of the community.

Four decades of displaying pure professionalism.

Four decades of insisting that public officials conduct the public's business in public.

Four decades of asking impertinent questions. As Tribune Managing Editor Doug Bauer said, "You don't replace Sandi Lee."

JEERS ... to the editor of this page. An April 24 editorial asserted that Corrections Corp. of America, which manages the Idaho Correctional Center near Boise, had avoided paying any taxes. The editorial got that wrong.

According to the New York Times, the Nashville, Tenn.-based CCA is among a group of corporations that have formed real estate investment trusts. The Times described REITs as "an aggressive move to reduce - or even eliminate - their federal tax bills."

CCA got its REIT approved for the new year and the Times said the company expects to save \$70 million.

CCA spokesman Steve Owen insists REIT status does not eliminate total federal tax liability. CCA also continues to pay property taxes, sales taxes, unemployment taxes and franchise fees.

Without knowing how much tax CCA will pay, people who follow the company closely concede the logic of Owen's argument: CCA will not escape tax-free. - M.T.