

# Delusional?

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to Idaho Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter. Last year, Otter pulled \$35 million from a wobbly state budget and handed it over to Idaho's corporations and well-off families by cutting income taxes.

This year, he encouraged lawmakers to eliminate the \$140 million property tax businesses pay on equipment. The Legislature extended that break to 90 percent of Idaho's companies and thereby kept the cost down to \$20 million.

Says Otter: Not enough.

Otter told the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry convention at Coeur d'Alene it's time to lower income tax rates further. He's still pushing for a total personal property tax repeal that would spread \$120 million to the richest corporations in the state.

Otter has money to lavish on his corporate cronies because public education is \$110 million short of its pre-recession budget while colleges and universities have \$48 million less.

That's placed a burden on ordinary Idahoans - who have coughed up more property taxes for schools and tuition charges at college.

After more than a decade of tax cuts and depleted services, the state is in the basement in most categories except when it comes to creating minimum-wage jobs or filling prisons.

Either Idaho's millionaire chief executive is delusional about this failed economic development strategy or he's become callous to the collateral damage these policies are inflicting on the middle class.

JEERS ... to Washington Gov. Jay Inslee. With his state standing on the edge of its own fiscal cliff, the rookie governor decided to fan partisan flames. Washington's Legislature has yet to produce the budget that will take effect July 1.

Inslee's Democratic Party controls the House, which wants to plug holes in the budget with more taxes. Republicans have nominal control of the Senate, which wants to restrain spending.

However, both sides have been creeping closer together. Last week, House Democrats shaved about \$800 million from their proposal. At the same time, Senate Republicans said they'd be willing to support new "resources" in exchange for policy reforms.

That puts the two sides about \$200 million apart or "about one-half of one percent of a budget that will wind up somewhere around \$33.5 billion," writes Washington State Wire's Erik Smith.

So why did Inslee accuse Republicans of playing ideological obstructionism? Predictably, Republicans such as Senate leader Mark Schoesler of Ritzville were seething.

Time will tell if Inslee's combative strategy works. But his predecessors, including Booth Gardner and Chris Gregoire, chose to serve as budget mediators rather than partisan bomb throwers.

CHEERS ... to Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho. From the way he took on Tea Party favorite Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., and the conservative Heritage Foundation last week, you might almost forget he ditched fellow House "Gang of Eight" members who are laboring toward bipartisan immigration reform.

The setting was a closed-door Republican Study Committee session. According to the National Review's Jonathan Strong, Bachmann - whose nativist rhetoric peaked when she accused State Department official Huma Abedin, a Muslim-American, of associating with the Muslim Brotherhood - blasted the Senate immigration bill and urged lawmakers to "first, do no harm."

Countered Labrador, "We have to do something" because the current system is already doing harm. "Anything," Labrador said, is better than the current system.

Next, Labrador took aim at a faulty Heritage study that claims reform would be a drain on the economy because immigrants would take more than they contribute. That study gives people no credit for working hard, gaining an education and earning more.

Apparently, that's not what people in the room wanted to hear. Sources told Strong that Labrador was dismissive toward Bachmann and "snippy" toward arguments he was "sick of hearing."

What's not to like?

JEERS ... to Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Washington, and Congressmen Mike Simpson and Labrador, both R-Idaho. Last week, they were among 221 Republicans and three Democrats who cast a cynical vote on immigration.

Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, used the annual Homeland Security department appropriation to score points - by seeking to block the Obama administration's Dream Act-lite. Under that policy, the White House agreed not to deport people who were brought into this country illegally as children and through no fault of their own. To qualify, young people must have served in the military or are attending college.

"The amendment blew up the Dream Act, taking away all discretion from the Department of Homeland Security to focus its deportation resources on criminals and miscreants and forcing the department to end any deferral in the deportation process that enables 'dreamers' to stay in the United States," writes congressional scholar Norm Ornstein.

Why couldn't McMorris Rodgers, Simpson and Labrador stand apart from their party line? Just once? Especially when it's a matter of humanity?

JEERS ... to the Idaho County Republican Central Committee. Beginning today, the state GOP Central Committee will consider the handiwork of their Idaho County colleagues as well as Cornel Rasor of the Bonner County Central committee - a resolution urging state lawmakers to obstruct Idaho cities from protecting the civil rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people.

Cities such as Moscow and Coeur d'Alene have acted because the Legislature will not.

So here comes a group of people who are always screaming about local control urging state lawmakers to take away local control. When it comes to kicking people they don't like, why should their principles get in the way? - M.T.