

Welcome to the Gem State's grand inquisition

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

It's hard to know who looks more foolish:

The Idaho Republican Party's apparatchiks threatening to rebuke any legislative, statewide or congressional candidate who supports daylight-saving time.

Or an elected official who takes these kinds of threats seriously.

True, GOP leaders, meeting in McCall earlier this month, rejected the radical suggestion that county, legislative and state central committees bounce ideological heretics from the primary election ballot.

But they latched on to something else: Authorizing party officials to essentially endorse - or withhold favor - to candidates on the eve of the primary.

That applies to candidates who don't follow the state party platform - which includes such oddities as repealing the 17th Amendment's direct election of U.S. senators.

But at least the party platform is a publicly vetted document and what emerges from the convention is available to see.

Lurking within the latest plan is this phrase: "We call upon the state chairman to communicate to the party at large information regarding adherence by Republican office holders, statewide office holders and state legislators to the state party platform and applicable resolutions adopted at our state conventions and party meetings (emphasis added).

Passed in the heat of the moment, resolutions are informal statements that tend to disappear. Ranging from the silly to the explosive, they rarely see the light of day. Even now, you can't find which resolutions passed. The GOP is in no hurry to post them.

All you have to go on is what was proposed.

So what is Congressman Raul Labrador, R-Idaho, supposed to do? In one way or another, Labrador has been pursuing comprehensive immigration reform. If he continues, that would put him at odds with a resolution directing him to co-sponsor a bill that focuses on border security alone.

And God forbid Congressman Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, and Sens. Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, both R-Idaho, ever go along with a budget deficit compromise that yields \$9 of spending cuts for \$1 of tax increases. That would put them at odds of at least one proposed GOP resolution condemning any and all further taxes.

Then there's the county sheriff who cooperates with the FBI or the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. He might run afoul of a resolution calling upon him to "take such measures as may be necessary to prevent the enforcement of any federal acts, laws, orders, rules or regulations which violate the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States."

And then there is this gem: Because most people are "aggravated and annoyed" about springing forward and falling back every six months and because "there are still 24 hours in a day and the same amount of daylight no matter where clocks are set (i.e. no 'savings' of daylight)."

This is an issue that requires the accumulated wisdom of the Idaho Republican Party? What's a poor legislator to do?

Some elected officials will simply go along. By and large, this would be the intelligentsia that scores well on the Idaho Freedom Foundation's Freedom Index.

Others will disregard it.

But what about the Republican officeholder who has expressed his independence three or four times but wishes to avoid a fifth confrontation with the party's thought police?

There's a cure for this. It's called a two-party system. Competitive politics would stop the Idaho Republican Party's grand inquisition.

Idaho should try it sometime. - M.T.