

# He's baaaack!

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

CHEERS ... to David Estes of Lewiston. The chairman of Taxpayers Against Unfair Taxation has taken a low profile since last May's Lewiston School Board election, where his slate of candidates got shellacked.

But he's back. On Estes' Idaho Observer website (<http://theidobserver.com>), you will find TAUT's endorsements in the Lewiston City Council campaigns:

- No. 1 - Ryan (R.J.) Johnson.
- No. 2 - Walter Phillips.
- No. 3. -Bob Blakey
- No. 4 -Gordon Gregg.

In other words, if you want to give TAUT allies Clinton Daniel and Ged Randall a majority on the council, follow Estes' advice: Vote for Johnson and Phillips.

If not, choose someone else.

Like him or not, Estes serves a purpose. TAUT is a political brand and Estes helps define Lewiston politics.

For too long, he's been missing in action.

Welcome back, Dave. You've been missed.

JEERS ... to former Idaho House Speaker Lawrence (Boss) Denney, R-Midvale. In Idaho, it's an open secret that the shortest path to a lucrative state pension involves spending a few years as a part-time legislator, then latching on to a highly paid state administrative job for 42 months.

That's because years of legislative service are multiplied against the higher full-time salary. No other part-time state employee gets the best of both worlds.

Denney, a nine-term incumbent, is entitled to a monthly pension check of about \$500 - based on legislative pay of \$16,438.

However, if his quest for Idaho secretary of state succeeds, he would be paid \$99,450 - and after 42 months in office would qualify for a pension of about \$3,600 a month.

Don't think Denney hasn't been paying attention. Last year, former state Rep. Dennis Lake, R-Blackfoot, ran a bill to end this self-dealing arrangement.

Guess who single-handedly blocked it?

That's right.

Boss Denney.

Denney has been on the hunt for a top-level state office as far back as 2009, when he entertained thoughts of running for state treasurer, assuming incumbent Ron Crane pursued something else.

You don't think that was on his mind when Lake's bill crossed his desk?

Denney told the Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell his action was "absolutely not" tied to his own plans.

Uh-huh.

CHEERS ... to former Idaho Gov. Phil Batt. The godfather of Idaho's human rights law received the Idaho human rights lifetime achievement award Tuesday. And, in character, Batt broke with members of his own Republican Party by calling on lawmakers to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Lawmakers repeatedly have refused to change the law, leading seven Idaho cities, including Moscow, to enact their own human rights ordinances.

"The Idaho Legislature showed up with the biggest stupidity, last time, regarding to add the words 'sexual orientation' to the human rights statute," Batt said. "They accomplished absolutely nothing by it, except to be made to look like fools.

"A person, a homosexual, who can't rent a room or get a job because of his orientation - (that) doesn't make any sense to anybody," Batt said. "Why some of the politicians are not more sensitive to that - more sensible, I should say than that - beats me."

By the mid-1960s, racism against Idaho's Asians and Mexican-Americans was common. Batt quit his Elks Club membership when it wouldn't serve his Japanese friend. Businesses posted "No Mexicans allowed" signs in their windows.

Then in the state Senate, Batt held as many as 60 hearings, which culminated in passage of a state civil rights law - banning discrimination on the job, in housing, education and public accommodations on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age or disability - and creation of the Human Rights Commission.

Years later, Batt promoted Idaho's recognition of the Martin Luther King Jr., holiday.

As governor, he burned up much of his political capital securing worker compensation insurance for Idaho's agricultural laborers.

Batt is the first recipient of the Idaho human rights lifetime achievement award. No one deserves it more.

JEERS ... to Jim Chmelik and his colleagues on the Idaho County Commission. They just handed over \$5,000 of your hard-earned money to a special interest - former Utah legislator Ken Ivory's American Lands Council.

Ivory is pushing the implausible idea that the federal government is going to transfer 32 million acres to the state.

Even if it happened, Idaho could never afford the \$400 million maintaining those lands costs each year without selling some to the highest bidder.

Who's to say, down the road, Idaho County elects an uber-progressive commissioner who decides to spend your \$5,000 on his pet project - say, the American Civil Liberties Union? Or the Sierra Club?

What would you say then?

JEERS ... to Idaho Freedom Foundation President Wayne Hoffman. He prefers the label "educator" to "lobbyist" because he has organized IFF under the same section of the Internal Revenue Code that applies to charities.

When Hoffman's donors write him a check, they're able to deduct it from their income taxes.

So he can't lobby - at least not too much. Of course, Hoffman is a registered lobbyist. And his organization was the chief opponent to Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter's drive to create a state-based health insurance exchange under Obamacare.

But now the Idaho Freedom Foundation is erecting billboards around the state urging voters to pressure lawmakers to repeal the exchanges.

That's not "educating" lawmakers. It's not even "lobbying."

Appealing directly to voters is called campaigning.

Shouldn't the Internal Revenue Service have something to say about that? -M.T.