

# Robertson is just ducky with Boss Denney

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

If you liked the way Lawrence (Boss) Denney, R-Midvale, drove your Idaho House of Representatives during his tenure as speaker, you'll flip over the way he runs your elections if he becomes the next secretary of state.

If you vote Republican the way Denney wants you to, he'll clear a path.

But if you're among the groups leaning Democratic - young people, minorities, residents of Boise's North End, the cities of Moscow and Ketchum-Sun Valley - you may get stuck in long lines at the polls. Someone may challenge your ability to register on Election Day. And voter ID laws could be even more strictly enforced.

Here are the dots. You connect them:

- Encouraged by groups such as the American Legislative Exchange Council, Republicans in 19 states suppressed Democratic voters. Conspicuously absent from this movement was Idaho's current Republican secretary of state, Ben Ysursa. Along with his predecessor, Pete T. Cenarrusa, Ysursa has set the gold standard for safeguarding the franchise and enforcing Idaho's Sunshine Law, which requires campaigns and lobbyists to disclose where they get their money and how they spend it.
- Before his own GOP caucus ousted him as speaker a year ago, Denney helped suppress all but registered Republicans from the GOP primary election. He sought to undermine the constitutional independence of Idaho's Citizen Redistricting Commission. Denney showered his political allies, such as tax scofflaw and former state Rep. Phil Hart, R-Hayden, with kid-glove treatment while hammering his critics, such as former state Rep. Tom Trail, R-Moscow. And this speaker had no compunction about telling a private company to fire a lobbyist he didn't like to make room for one of his political cronies.
- In his first major move as a candidate for secretary of state, he's up to his old tricks. Which brings us to Phil Robertson. Yes, that Phil Robertson, the "Duck Dynasty" star with - shall we say - a less than inclusive view of people unlike himself.

In his interview with GQ, Robertson went into graphic detail about his objections to homosexuals: "Everything is blurred on what's right and wrong. ... Sin becomes fine. Start with homosexual behavior and just morph out from there. Bestiality, sleeping around with this woman and that woman and that woman and those men."

And the cable television star doubled down on his comments by opining that African-Americans were doing just fine before the Civil Rights movement ended Jim Crow in the old South: "I never, with my eyes, saw the mistreatment of any black person. ... Pre-entitlement, pre-welfare, you say: Were they happy? They were godly; they were happy; no one was singing the blues."

Robertson, whose contract with A&E was off and then on again, speaks for himself.

But Denney has arranged for Phil Robertson and his son, Al Robertson - as well as their wives - to hold a March 29 fundraiser for his campaign at the Idaho Center in Nampa.

Nothing he's heard so far causes Denney any heartburn.

"I think there is a standard in this country now of political correctness, and certainly what Phil said was probably outside that political correctness," Denney told Boise's KTVB. "But at the same time, that's his belief, and certainly that's my belief, and he's entitled to it."

And why not? Raising a pile of cash for campaign commercials can't hurt. And with four Republicans in the race splitting the vote, all Denney needs to do to win is appeal to the hard-core base of people who agree with Robertson.

But what does this say about Boss Denney's ability to be impartial, to be the person you can rely upon to protect your voting rights - especially if you're gay, a minority or a Democrat - and to keep the lobbyists in check? - M.T.