

# Cheers & Jeers: Moyle's shell game

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

DJEERS... to Idaho House Majority Leader Mike Moyle, R-Star. He's hiding the pea under each of these shells:

- For more than two decades, Idaho's cities and counties have operated under a property tax ceiling that often falls below the rate of inflation. You see the results in the inadequate budgets for indigent criminal legal defense, aging and overcrowded jails, crumbling roads and stagnant employee pay.
- In that same time, Idaho lawmakers have sliced more than \$700 million in the yearly share of the state's personal income devoted to public schools. The U.S. Census Bureau rates Idaho dead last in the amount of money it raises for each pupil. Education Week gives the state an F for school finance.
- It's been almost 20 years since Idaho raised its fuel taxes. Every year, the state falls \$262 million short of maintaining its highways and bridges.

By siphoning half the property tax dollars local taxing districts pick up for new construction, Moyle would take about \$9 million from Idaho's underfunded local governments and hand it over to Idaho's underfunded schools.

That's on top of a series of bills that would drain sales tax dollars from the general fund - half of which goes to public schools - and spend it on highways.

Moyle's blowing smoke. Rather than addressing the real needs of local government, schools and transportation he's robbing Peter to pay Paul, then to pay Peter, then Paul, then Peter again, and so on.

CHEERS ... to state Reps. Caroline Nilsson Troy, R-Genesee, Paulette Jordan, D-Plummer, and John Rusche and Dan Rudolph, both D-Lewiston. Had it been left up to them, Idaho would not be about to turn a blind eye to the suffering of children.

They were among 31 House members who Wednesday turned thumbs down on an American Legislative Exchange Council clone - sponsored by Idaho Falls Republican Janet Trujillo - to make parental rights supreme over the "care, custody, education and control of their children."

That's sufficiently vague to invite all kinds of trouble.

When can society step in to stop the abuse and neglect of children?

Could a parent dictate what the public schools teach his child?

Does this silence noncustodian parents about the care and education of their children?

Rusche said the bill "overturns a whole body of law that we have put around protecting children."

Djeers ... to Reps. Shannon McMillan, R-Silverton, and Paul Shepherd, R-Riggins. They were among 37 House members who voted for - and thereby passed - Trujillo's measure.

Better hope the Senate shows more sense.

CHEERS ... to Washington Sen. Steve Litzow, R-Mercer Island. Chairman of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee, Litzow is among the most prominent proponents of an emerging bipartisan plan to send last year's class size reduction measure back to the ballot.

The longer Washington voters looked over Initiative 1351, the more skeptical they became. Its 39,561 margin out of more than 2 million votes cast probably would have evaporated entirely had the election come a few days later.

The problem is not I-1351's aim of reducing class sizes; it's the cost - \$2 billion during the next two years. I-1351 backers didn't provide the money.

Unless they can muster a two-thirds vote to suspend the measure, lawmakers are obligated to follow the will of the voters. But Litzow and others suggest amending the measure and sending it back to the voters.

It's plausible: Doing so requires only a simple majority in the House and Senate.

It's practical: The tactic buys them a year to satisfy the education spending requirements imposed by the Washington Supreme Court's McCleary ruling.

And it's reasonable: If voters want smaller class sizes, they have to pay for it.

CHEERS ... to Sen. Dan Schmidt, D-Moscow. Idaho taxpayers just got stuck with the bill for a political celebration. He doesn't think that's right.

Earlier this year, Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter's inaugural ceremonies on the Capitol steps and the Inaugural Ball in the Capitol rotunda ran up a combined bill of \$52,708.

Granted, security expenses in a post-9/11 era have risen. But in the past, governors and their supporters have covered the costs of these affairs.

Not this time. This week, Otter came hat in hand asking the Legislature's budget-writing committee to cover a \$25,000 deficit.

The governor has plenty of friends in Idaho's corporate community. Why can't he turn to them?

Or why didn't he raise the cost of attending the inaugural ball - which is supposed to be the fundraising arm of the event? Can you think of one politician who would forego the inaugural ball because of higher ticket prices?

"I'm all in favor of a party and I appreciated the inauguration," Schmidt said. "But I am going to vote against this. I don't think taxpayers should be paying for this."

Unfortunately, Schmidt was the only no vote.

JEERS ... to Alex LeBeau. The generalissimo over at the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry believes he can annihilate any legislator who gets in his way. Just ask former Senate tax committee chairman Tim Corder, R-Mountain Home, who lost his seat to Sen. Bert Brackett, R-Rogerson.

Or talk to former Rep. Lenore Hardy Barrett, R-Challis. To depose her, IACI accused Barrett of being insufficiently hostile to wolves.

This year, it's Sen. Jeff Siddoway, R-Terreton. How dare the Senate tax committee chairman block any tax cuts until teacher salaries are boosted to at least \$40,000 a year?

The sheer audacity.

Who does this petty politician think he's tangling with?

Has he not heard of the mighty LeBeau?

In an email laced with F-bombs, sexism and arrogance, LeBeau wrote: "Suckaway can eat a dick and hug a teacher. How f\*\*\*ing stupid. Let me see. Make me and my committee completely irrelevant for the foreseeable future. Jesus! People have no f\*\*\*ing vision or forethought. Doucher. Regardless we will drop some s\*\*t in his lap - just to be dicks."

How could such a political mastermind miss Rule No. 1 - never put anything in writing? What was intended for his nearest and dearest friends first ended up in the hands of Senate leadership. Then Idaho Public Television's Melissa Davlin acquired it.

LeBeau still has his job.

For now. - M.T.