

Out of touch

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

DJeers ... to Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash. On Obamacare's fifth anniversary, she encouraged her constituents to share their nightmares about the law. Instead, she got close to 10,000 responses from people who said the act helped them.

Some - many with pre-existing conditions - had not had health insurance coverage before. Others found their coverage more affordable.

McMorris Rodgers' response was telling: "The stories are largely around pre-existing conditions and those that are getting health insurance up to age 26," she told the Spokesman-Review.

In other words, McMorris Rodgers seems stunned to have discovered how people have come to rely on Obamacare.

The Seattle Times' Danny Westneat took things one step further. In the eastern Washington region where McMorris Rodgers was raised, people are flocking to sign up.

In Stevens County - where the unemployment rate is 12 percent - 15.5 percent of the adult population has signed up for the Medicaid coverage Obamacare provides them. In Ferry County, more than 16 percent of the adult population is getting Medicaid.

That's compared to a national average of 4 percent.

When it comes to Obamacare, McMorris Rodgers has lost touch with her district.

JEERS ... to U.S. Sens. Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, both R-Idaho. Every time an Idaho politician starts talking like a Sagebrush Rebel, people across the ideological spectrum bring him up short. Yet, Crapo and Risch supported a measure that some characterize as a proxy vote for transferring federal lands to the state.

Crapo told the Tribune's Eric Barker Wednesday that it's a stretch to go from a technical budget vote to shifting Idaho's national forests or rangeland to state ownership. (Risch, characteristically, declined to explain himself.)

But why even go there?

The minute Idaho takes over these lands, its state budget will blow up. At Congressman Mike Simpson's request, the Congressional Research Service's study found the state would spend at least \$392 million - and more like \$500 million - a year managing these acres. The University of Idaho Policy Analysis Group twisted itself into a pretzel coming up with a scenario in which the state would not lose money.

You can see what comes next. Massive liquidation and disinvestment, selling off tracts to the highest bidder.

Your favorite fishing hole, hiking trail and camping site might come with a rental fee.

Expect to see more development, ramshackle trailer parks, fenced sheep ranches and forests so logged-over that the second growth may not occur until your grandchildren graduate from college.

Coming from Risch, this is no surprise. But Crapo crafted the on-the-ground pact that placed a half-million acres within the Owyhee Canyonlands into six wilderness areas. He's responsible for forging the Clearwater Basin Collaborative.

Sure, he has to shift to the right in anticipation of next year's re-election campaign. But Crapo is better than this.

CHEERS ... to state Sens. Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, and Jeff Siddoway, R-Terreton. Wednesday, they blocked wasting more money attempting to wrest control of the federal government's lands.

At issue was a bill sought by state Rep. Terry Gestrin, R-Donnelly, and state Sen. Sheryl Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood, to forge a compact with Utah and other states for that purpose.

The price: Only \$150,000, Gestrin said.

If you're keeping count, members of the Legislature's public lands task force already blew through a ton of cash hiring former Interior Solicitor William Myers of Boise for the kind of legal analysis Deputy Attorney General Steve Strack provided at no charge.

Strack said Utah state Rep. Ken Ivory's pipe dream of suing the federal government into relinquishing its lands violated the U.S. Constitution, the Idaho Constitution, 200 years of legal rulings and congressional precedent.

At an hourly rate of \$435, Myers' latest billings added up to \$28,631 - elevating his total to more than \$90,000.

JEERS ... to former state Rep. Cindy Agidius, R-Moscow. Perched as the House Republican Caucus communications director, Agidius is collecting opposition research on the woman who took her job away, state Rep. Paulette Jordan, D-Plummer.

So far, she's got a picture of Jordan disregarding Risch's formal address to the House and missing a committee meeting. After House Democratic Leader John Rusche complained, House Speaker Scott Bedke apparently told Agidius to knock it off.

If Agidius wants a rematch in 2016, she's doing it all wrong.

After winning against Jordan in 2012 by a mere 125 votes, Agidius lost last fall by three times as much - 524 votes. Translation: Voters fired Agidius - with good reason.

With the University of Idaho in her backyard, Agidius was the sole no-show on last year's guns on campus bill. Worse, she remained neutral through the GOP primary. Not until she faced Jordan in the fall did Agidius discover she opposed putting concealed handguns within reach of college students, faculty and staff.

Voters didn't buy it.

Boise doesn't need another ex-legislator hanging on at the state Capitol. If Agidius wants another chance, she should be home mending fences.

JEERS ... to state Rep. Caroline Troy, R-Genesee. Monday, only three House Republicans voted against House Majority Leader Mike Moyle's plan to give rich people a tax break by sticking it to Idaho's lower- and middle-class families - and pulling \$70 million out of the general fund that supports schools, higher education, public health, safety and general government services.

Troy should have been among them.

Moyle's bill was bad news for the University of Idaho - which has yet to recover from cuts imposed during the Great Recession. And it was bad news for public education. The legislative district that sent Troy to Boise is second to none in its support for schools.

But those three Republican no votes came from Neal Anderson of Blackfoot, Gayle Batt of Wilder and Wendy Horman of Idaho Falls.

Troy was so enthusiastic about Moyle's plan she co-sponsored it. That puts her in league with conservatives such as Sens. Bob Nonini, R-Coeur d'Alene, and Nuxoll, as well as Reps. Judy Boyle, R-Midvale, and Ronald Nate, R-Rexburg.

Who's giving Troy advice?

Agidius? - M.T.