

Up, up and away

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Sen. Bob Nonini, R-Coeur d'Alene, and Rep. Vito Barbieri, R-Dalton Gardens. Nowhere within Idaho's Legislature will you find any conservatives who are more self-righteous than these two.

Last year, Barbieri chastised his colleagues on a daily basis about how much money they were spending.

Back in 2012, Nonini sought to purge from the Senate Republicans he considered insufficiently pure.

But when it comes to spending your money on their travel, the sky's the limit.

Literally.

Combing through state travel records, The Associated Press' Kimberlee Kruesi discovered these two spared no expense traveling home each weekend during the legislative session.

Nonini spent nearly \$8,800 on air fares, car rentals and mileage.

Barbieri racked up nearly \$8,500 traveling home on weekends - plus another \$1,226 attending the 2014 American Legislative Exchange Council conference.

Travel costs for northern Idaho lawmakers are typically higher than for their southern Idaho counterparts who often can drive home.

Just the same, among the dozen lawmakers who fly from Boise to Spokane, there's a wide difference.

For instance, Nonini routinely spent \$462 per flight - the amount Southwest charges for its first-class equivalent.

The "Business Select" fare allows the passenger to breeze past the great unwashed waiting in line and board immediately.

"Business Select" passengers get a free "premium" onboard drink and they are encouraged to "reward yourself with double points per dollar. ..."

Most of the time, Barbieri also paid \$462 per ticket. When he didn't, Barbieri paid \$428 a flight.

Compare that to Rep. Ron Mendive, R-Coeur d'Alene, who often charged the state \$192 for his flights - Southwest's rate when you make a reservation at least three weeks ahead. He spent \$5,776 on travel.

Likewise, Rep. Eric Redman, R-Athol, never shelled out more than \$327 and frequently kept his fares down to \$192. His total travel costs came to \$3,494.

Idaho tells public employees - politicians included - to "use the most practical mode of travel from the standpoint of time and expense."

In other words, remember whose money you're spending.

How could the Great Nonini not know that?

CChEERS ... to Reps. Drew MacEwen, R-Union, and Drew Stokesbary, R-Auburn. They want to impeach Washington state Auditor Troy Kelley and they're not about to be deterred by Speaker Frank Chopp, D-Seattle, and Republican Leader Dan Kristiansen, R-Snohomish.

The House leaders think impeachment will distract a special session devoted to budget issues.

But MacEwen and Stokesbary are so new to Olympia - MacEwen is in his second term; Stokesbary is a freshman - that they don't know any better. They figure when a state official faces a 10-count federal indictment accusing him of tax fraud, lying under oath and lying to the Internal Revenue Service, he should quit.

If he won't leave voluntarily, he ought be pushed out. And since a judge last week blocked a citizens' campaign from recalling Kelley, that leaves it up to the Legislature to insist.

Kelley has taken an unpaid leave of absence, appointing office veteran director of operations Jan Jutte to take his place. But he is clinging to the office - even as his attorneys have pushed back the date of his trial from June 8 to Jan. 19, 2016.

"Our belief is that Mr. Kelley is guilty of malfeasance by abandoning his office," MacEwen told [Crosscut.com](#)'s John Stang.

CHEERS ... to Washington's 9th Legislative delegation - Sen. Mark Schoessler, R-Ritzville, Rep. Joe Schmick, R-Colfax, and former Rep. Susan Fagan, R-Pullman.

Last month, they joined in the unanimous approval - 49-0 in the Senate, 97-0 in the House - of a bill bringing Washington's child support enforcement into compliance with federal law.

What a contrast to the mess in Boise, where lawmakers are about to assemble in a special session Monday. If they don't bring Idaho into compliance, 155,000 families face the loss of child support payments.

As in Boise, the chimera of a federal child support enforcement treaty subjecting Americans to Sharia law reared up. But rather than yielding to hysteria and derailing the whole bill, Spokane Valley Republicans drafted and passed amendments to clear up the issue, the Spokesman-Review's Jim Camden reported.

Gov. Jay Inslee signed the package into law last Friday.

CHEERS ... to Lewiston City Councilor Bob Blakey. Give him points for seeing the current legal standoff among the city, Nez Perce County and the Urban Renewal Agency through the eyes of ordinary taxpayers:

- They elected councilors and county commissioners to make decisions and work together - not to litigate their disputes.
- No matter who wins the city-county-URA lawsuit, the public gets to pay for the lawyers on all sides. So far, the legal bills have passed the \$50,000 threshold - after just one court hearing. Can you imagine the billable hours for a trial - or even a possible appeal to the Idaho Supreme Court?
- Whether the URA gets to keep its revenues or a share of it goes back to the county makes no difference to the taxpayers. The pie doesn't get smaller. It's just sliced up differently.

So Blakey offered an olive branch: Why not negotiate an out-of-court settlement?

"At some point, the taxpayers are going to hold us accountable," he said. "It's time this committee steps forward in good faith."

Who could possibly say no to that?

JEERS ... to Idaho Commerce Director Jeff Sayer. More than a year ago, he sought and secured legislative approval to begin offering income, sales and withholding tax breaks - on a case-by-case basis - to companies that promised to create new jobs.

First out of the blocks was SkyWest of St. George, Utah, which last year picked up a \$1.3 million tax incentive for a Boise airport maintenance hangar that pledged to hire 50 people earning an average \$52,000.

The Idaho Statesman's Audrey Dutton reports United Airlines has outsourced about 50 Boise-based operations and customer service-related jobs to SkyWest. United saves money because those outsourced jobs will pay far less.

However you add this up, it looks like tax dollars that otherwise would have supported public schools lured a company to Idaho that is now helping to cannibalize higher-wage jobs in this state. - M.T.