

No from Idaho

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to U.S. Sens. Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, both R-Idaho. With each passing day, it becomes more apparent how ardently they follow the gun lobby line.

Earlier this week, Crapo and Risch joined the bulk of their Republican colleagues - with the exception of Illinois' Mark Kirk and New Hampshire's Kelly Ayotte - in dooming to defeat measures sponsored by Democratic Sens. Dianne Feinstein of California and Chris Murphy of Connecticut in response to the June 12 slaughter at an Orlando, Fla., nightclub.

And what were Feinstein and Murphy proposing?

A ban on military assault rifles?

Hardly.

Limiting magazine capacities?

Nothing so ambitious.

Murphy simply would close the loophole that allows people to purchase guns without a background check through some gun show sales and over the internet.

And Feinstein's modest plan sought to give the Department of Justice authority to deny firearms sales to people deemed to be suspected terrorists. About 420,000 people are on the terrorism watch list - and about 2 percent of those are U.S. citizens.

Both ideas have enormous support. Monday's CNN/ORC poll showed 92 percent backing more background checks and 85 percent in favor of banning firearm purchases by people on watchlists.

You can argue - as some civil liberties advocates have - about the due process rights of people placed on those lists. But what was the GOP response?

Getting behind Texas Sen. John Cornyn's bill, which was more about scoring debating points than solving the problem.

For instance, Cornyn would have the government prove a suspect either will - or already has - engaged in terrorism or conspired to do so, all within three days.

As the Lewiston Tribune's William L. Spence put it, "Cornyn's alternative would essentially preserve the right to bear arms for anyone - American citizen or not - who didn't have the blood of innocents dripping from their hands."

For Crapo and Risch, it was good enough. They voted for it.

Next up, after both plans were defeated, was Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins's compromise. Rather than bar sales to people on the consolidated terror list, Collins would screen only the 109,000 people on the no-fly list - of which about 2,800 are American citizens.

Thursday, Collins drew enough fellow Republicans to her side - including Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, Jeff Flake of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina - to survive a test vote.

But Crapo and Risch voted to stop her.

If and when the American people find some light at the end of this dark tunnel, they will not have Idaho's senators to thank.

CHEERS ... to Asotin County Superior Court Judge Scott D. Gallina.

Wednesday, Gallina made it clear that in the state of Washington an elected official can make a political blunder without being recalled.

At issue was Clarkston cannabis advocate Tom Martin's recall campaign against Clarkston Councilors Terry Beadles and Kelly Blackmon. The two are all that remain of a one-time council majority that banned recreational pot sales in their community.

Incensed that the council would ignore public opinion, voters last year removed every member they could. But Beadles and Blackmon were not up for re-election.

Once seated in January, the new council lifted the ban and legal marijuana sales began.

Not good enough for Martin, who argued Beadles and Blackmon violated their oath of office by being so intransigent.

Turning a deaf ear to public opinion is political malpractice. But grounds for recall?

Not under Washington law, Gallina ruled.

"It was legal to do what they did," Gallina said. "Whether it was smart or not remains to be seen."

Which returns this dispute back where it belongs - the 2017 city election. If Beadles and Blackmon seek re-election, let the voters then determine whether these blundering councilors deserve another term.

JEERS ... to Center for Biological Diversity Executive Director Kieran Suckling of Tucson, Ariz.

Nobody's going to expect this lawsuit-happy environmentalist to support Idaho's management of wolves. The state attempts to keep wolf numbers in check through hunting and trapping - while maintaining a population sufficiently large to avoid an Endangered Species Act re-listing.

But accusing Idaho's hunters of promoting a wolf poaching-tolerant culture - all in the name of drawing contributions from the environmental community?

Really?

About a month ago, someone removed and killed young wolves from a den located in the Sage Creek drainage near Coeur d'Alene. Idaho Fish and Game is offering a reward for information.

The Center for Biological Diversity is kicking in another \$10,000. So far, so good.

Then Suckling put this in a fundraising appeal:

"A poisonous, anti-wolf culture has taken root in Idaho, driven by seasonal wolf hunts and fueled by social media sites dedicated to wolf-killing braggadocio. This latest pup-killing incident was almost inevitable."

Isn't wolf management in Idaho tough enough?

CHEERS ... to Idaho Democratic Party Chairman Bert Marley. On his watch, his party is inching toward a presidential primary.

Idaho Democrats now operate under a caucus system - which is a boon to activists with enough time to spend anywhere from 90 minutes to several hours to cast their preference.

With no absentee ballot, so students, military personnel and housebound people are disenfranchised. So is anyone whose job or family obligations prevents him from attending.

Even so, roughly 24,000 Democrats showed up for the 22 March Idaho caucuses. You could expect almost twice that many to vote in a primary.

Idahoans already are paying about \$2 million for a presidential primary, but only the Republican Party uses it. About 227,000 voters turned out for the March 8 GOP election.

Last week, the state Democratic Convention endorsed making the change. Sometime between now and 2020, the Democratic state central committee will decide.

"A lot of people say, 'Well, we're going to be paying for it

anyhow,' " Marley told the Idaho Statesman's Bill Dentzer. " 'We might as well be using it, too.' " - M.T.