

Non-incumbent

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Republican legislative candidate Thyra Stevenson of Lewiston. She faces Democrat Bob Blakey for the open House seat created by Rep. Dan Rudolph's retirement from office.

Rudolph won that seat in 2014 by defeating Stevenson, who was then serving her first term, by 26 votes. Judging from Stevenson's campaign, she would rather ignore that history.

In advancing her summer "Whistle stop" events, she billed herself as "Rep. Stevenson."

And you can find a campaign sign in which the message reads: "Re-elect Thyra Stevenson, Idaho House."

Perhaps Stevenson is being frugal by recycling materials from her 2014 campaign. But why not run a sticker across the top of the sign, removing the inaccuracy?

Or you could read into this a deliberate deception. Idaho voters routinely reward incumbency. A Republican seeking "re-election" is at a decided advantage in the Gem State.

Occasionally, you'll find someone appointed to fill a vacant elected office claiming to run for re-election. But to have a private citizen claiming to seek "re-election" to an office she does not hold is virtually unheard of.

What is Stevenson saying? When voters rejected her two years ago, it didn't count?

CHEERS ... to state Sen. Dan Schmidt, D-Moscow. Following his conscience is costing him dearly.

Schmidt can't understand how a group of state lawmakers - who receive government-provided health insurance - would deprive 78,000 low-income Idahoans from government-provided health insurance.

Those are the people in the so-called Medicaid gap. They make too little to afford government-subsidized private health insurance under Obamacare.

Idaho's GOP-led Legislature refuses to extend Medicaid coverage to them - even though it would save state taxpayers millions and spare people from dying prematurely for lack of preventive medical care.

In protest, Schmidt walked away from the health insurance coverage he's entitled to receive as a state lawmaker.

As the Idaho Statesman's Bill Dentzer reported this week, that's a sweet deal for legislators.

For one thing, these part-time officials qualify for a benefit most people work full-time to obtain. For another, it's relatively cheap. The state's most popular health insurance policy runs \$171 a month - for an employee, spouse and two or more children.

Dentzer reported 30 of Idaho's 35 state senators and 60 of its 70 House members are enrolled in state health insurance policies.

When Schmidt dropped that policy last spring, you got the impression he might secure insurance elsewhere. Not so.

Because he walked away from an employer-provided plan, Schmidt is not entitled to sign up for insurance on Idaho's exchange until November.

So like 78,000 Idahoans, he now faces financial setbacks in the event of a major health care expense. And because Obamacare inflicts a tax penalty on those who forego insurance, Schmidt gets to pay that, too.

CHEERS ... to Eric Peterson of Lewiston. The chairman of the city's disability advisory committee pulled the trigger on a dangerous sidewalk that others tolerated for decades.

The wheelchair-bound Peterson shot video footage to demonstrate what it's like for a disabled person to traverse the cracked, uneven asphalt path along 19th Avenue in front of the Lewiston Center Mall.

A retired attorney, he also procured old blueprints that demonstrated the mall developers' intent to provide sidewalks.

No stranger to hazards facing the disabled, Peterson calls this one "the most dangerous sidewalk in town."

So Peterson filed a complaint - prompting the Lewiston City Council's 5-0 vote Monday to force the issue. It declared the path "dangerous and unsafe," obligating the owners to fix or replace the sidewalk.

If the owners fail to do so, the city can impose a lien.

Good for Peterson.

JEERS ... to Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter. First his office played politics with the transgender school restroom issue. Now it can't keep its facts straight.

Earlier this summer, Otter's office jumped into the fray, promising to file a friend of the court brief supporting a Texas lawsuit against Obama administration guidelines - which call for allowing transgender students "access to such facilities consistent with their gender identity."

Although implied, the White House has never said failure to comply would cost a state its federal education funds.

But it may be a moot point. As Idaho Education New's Kevin Richert surveyed a half-dozen large school districts last spring, he found them already in sync with the guidelines. What's more, the Idaho School Boards Association's suggested restroom policy mirrors the federal standard.

And when Otter's promised court filing arrived this week, it asserted the following:

- The amount of money at stake is \$161.1 million, Idaho's share of federal education funds.

Not so. Richert noted Idaho public schools have budgeted \$264.3 million in federal education funds.

- Idaho education relies on the federal government for 34.4 percent of its budget.

Not so. Richert noted the feds account for 13.7 percent of Idaho's \$1.6 billion K-12 budget.

- Otter's shop then doubled down on that line of reasoning, contending it referred to the share of federal money that flows through all education programs - from kindergarten through higher education. That includes \$400 million in grants and contracts as well as \$4.7 million for career-technical programs.

This all seems flimsy. Is Otter's office engaged in a serious effort? Or is this just a political gesture?

CHEERS ... to Jared Fuhriman of Idaho Falls. Five years ago, he was at the top of his game - serving his second term as the city's popular mayor. Then came a devastating diagnosis - at 49, he faced early onset Alzheimer's disease.

Now retired, Fuhriman opened up to his hometown newspaper, the Post Register, Sunday: "Going from Mach 90, all of a sudden, it's like, 'Now what ... do I do?'"

What Fuhriman has done is take on a notoriously cruel and incurable ailment. He's a self-described "guinea pig" in experimental studies at the University of Utah. And he's put himself out there, communicating and volunteering on behalf of researching and treating a disease that scares the hell out of people.

"I've learned that no one's immune," Fuhriman told the Post Register's Kevin Trevelyan. "Whether it's Alzheimer's or any other disease, everybody sooner or later will have some health issues." - M.T.

