

# Wrong address?

JEERS ... to state Sen. Dan Foreman, R-Rexburg.

Oops.

Foreman comes from Moscow.

He just votes and acts like he's from somewhere else.

Exhibit A - Alone among all 35 state senators last Thursday, Foreman voted against the budget bill that keeps the lights on at the University of Idaho.

His reason: It costs too much.

"I really wish I could have voted for it, but there was just too much pork," Foreman told the Tribune's William L. Spence.

Too much pork?

Can Foreman be so clueless about how Idaho's colleges and universities have languished these eight years in the shadow of budget cuts inflicted at the depth of the Great Recession? Even this budget - a mere 2.7 percent boost - all but guarantees the state will once again squeeze tuition-paying students to make up the difference.

Exhibit B - Tuesday, Foreman voted against a Permanent Building Fund budget that provides the UI with \$10 million for a Center for Agriculture, Food and Environment facility in the Magic Valley. The measure is also the source of \$10 million for Lewis-Clark State College's Career-Technical Education facility in the Orchards.

This time, Foreman had some company. Joining him in voting no were Sens. Lori Den Hartog, R-Meridian; Steven Thayne, R-Emmett, and Steve Vick, R-Dalton Gardens.

But of that group, Foreman was the only member who voted against the best interests of his own constituents.

Exhibit C - He's the only senator District 5 has, but Foreman is selective about which people he serves. As political columnist Chuck Malloy noted Sunday, Foreman's correspondence with constituents borders on the boorish: "I defeated your left-wing liberal candidate because a majority of voters chose me and my clearly outlined political platform of conservative values. So, your side lost and my side won. ... You simply don't like the fact that you are not getting your way any longer."

Exhibit D - With some of the state's leading research scientists in his backyard, Foreman described human-caused climate change as a bunch of liberal bunk.

"There is no substance to (this theory)," he told Spence. "I know credible scientists in the former Soviet Union who have concluded the Earth is actually cooling."

Just a reminder: Foreman is serving in Boise because he defeated former Sen. Dan Schmidt by a mere 336 votes out of 22,214 cast.

JEERS ... to state Rep. Priscilla Giddings, R-White Bird. The maven of mischief was at it again in the Idaho House Monday.

She put a bull's-eye on Attorney General Lawrence Wasden's operating budget - subjecting it to a reconsideration vote after the measure had already passed by a 40-30 margin.

Giddings said she had some technical issues that could be fixed easily, but her motion quickly became a referendum on Wasden's recommendation to cut the state's losses on yet another of the Legislature's unconstitutional attempts to undermine the reproductive rights of Idaho's women.

Two years ago, lawmakers passed a measure to block doctors from prescribing abortion-inducing medications over the phone. As always, warnings about losing in court went unheeded. But the U.S. Supreme Court removed all doubt on a 5-3 ruling last year when it overturned a Texas law that sought to shut down abortion clinics under the guise of imposing medical standards.

So Wasden could continue defending the Legislature's handiwork in federal court - and face the twin certainties of losing and forking over several hundred thousand dollars in legal fees to the attorneys representing Planned Parenthood.

Or he could make a deal. The arrangement he struck involved getting the Legislature to merely repeal the unconstitutional laws they passed two years ago. Nonetheless, the state still paid \$150,000 to cover the legal fees of the winning side.

Of course, lawmakers could have rejected Wasden's advice - they often do - and continued fighting the telemedicine battle in court. Instead, they conceded the logic of Wasden's position and followed his lead by 52-18.

Then came Giddings' reconsideration motion, which, as House State Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Loertscher, R-Iona, put it, was about nailing Wasden: "He absolutely threw in the towel."

They came within one vote - 34 for reconsideration, 36 against - of punishing Wasden with another run at his budget.

So you've got a dozen or so Republicans who agreed with Wasden when it was convenient and kicked him for being correct. Among them were Giddings as well as Reps. Mike Kingsley and Thyra Stevenson, both R-Lewiston, and Rep. Caroline Troy, R-Genesee.

Talk about having your political cake and eating it, too.

CHEERS ... to former Idaho Supreme Court Chief Justice Jim Jones. He keeps telling it like it is.

There's a lot of political hand-wringing going on about how the Legislature can't - or won't - protect children from faith-healing parents who allow them to suffer and die by refusing medical treatment. Even the mild change Sen. Dan Johnson, R-Lewiston, sought in the state's faith-healing loophole died on a 24-11 vote.

"Since at least the 1980s, when I served as Idaho attorney general, the Legislature has passed numerous laws intended to support the right to life by using the power of the government to require women to carry a fetus to term," Jones wrote in a recent column. "To my knowledge, none of those measures contained a religious exemption. The question arises as to whether the right to life of some children in our great state ceases upon birth."

JEERS ... to Johnson, Foreman and fellow Sen. Carl Crabtree, R-Grangeville. Wednesday, they voted to set up the state for another round of budget cuts.

How? By voting to lift Idaho's sales tax from food purchases.

Whatever its merits, there is no question the measure's price tag - about \$80 million - will strain a state budget that is already spending more money than it is taking in.

"We're digging ourselves a hole, and we're digging it pretty fast," said Sen. Jeff Siddoway, R-Terreton, who preceded Johnson as chairman of the Senate taxation committee.

Even one of the measure's supporters - Sen. Abby Lee, R-Fruitland - conceded the choice will come down to a cut in spending or eliminating sales tax exemptions elsewhere.

Just one thing: Have you ever seen this current crop of Idaho lawmakers raise taxes to avoid balancing a budget deficit with spending cuts?

Didn't think so. - M.T.