

TIMES-NEWS

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132 Fairfield St. W., Twin Falls, ID 83303
letters@magicvalley.com

Editorial Board
TRAVIS QUAST Publisher
MATT CHRISTENSEN Editor

Representative Sally Toone, D

1 What was the Legislature's single greatest achievement this session? What went right?

I believe the investment in education was the greatest achievement. The Legislature stayed true to the 5 year plan for K-12 education with funding. Much conversation was included on the teacher shortage as well as other improvements. Several rules and laws were adopted to address these needs as well as future needs of the post-secondary system and our workforce.

2 What do you wish lawmakers had accomplished but did not? What went wrong?

I would have liked to see some legislation on the health care issue. Pieces were adopted as in mental health for youth, but I still feel Idahoans need more opportunities for health care coverage. Transportation also became the victim of time and budgets. We do need to address our infrastructure and its maintenance.

3 What was your single best contribution to the session? Maybe sponsoring a key bill or working behind the scenes on high-profile legislation. Tell us something you did that you're proud of.

I was very much a part of the conversations and debates concerning education, both pro and con. We were able to advance rules, standards, and address teacher issues for our educational programs as well as advance needs for our community colleges and universities.

I did work on a bill to help rural teachers with loan forgiveness though we didn't get the funding quick enough to get it done.

4 What will be your focus over the interim?

I will be working on improving my loan forgiveness bill for next year as well as working with local government to address issues that arose this winter. I will be serving on the interim committee to study commercial vehicle registration fees, as well as the legislative representative on the State's River Governance Commission and the Idaho Rural Partnership.

Thank you for your time and call anytime. It is my honor to serve District 26.

Representative Sally Toone

Representative Steve Miller, R

1 What was the Legislature's single greatest achievement this session? What went right?

I don't know that there was a "greatest achievement," but there were some good things accomplished. The \$52 million emergency money for County Road & Bridge and Highway Districts was sorely needed. Limiting budget growth to 5.4% while meeting obligations and some additional needs of Education, Health & Welfare and Public Safety is a significant achievement. Increasing funding for Idaho Dept of Transportation was a move in the right direction, but leaving Counties and Highway Districts out of the sales tax portion of the appropriation was not equitable. Sales tax is collected across the state so it's only fair that the funding should be distributed across the entire transportation system. The funding of CSI's acquisition of Pristine Springs was an excellent long term investment for the college and for our region.

2. Outcome based funding for community colleges and universities.

3. Create a mechanism that would fund a 0.1% cut of individual and corporate tax from excess revenues. In other words, when the economy is growing and actual revenue exceeds budget forecasted revenue, a portion of this excess could be used for tax cuts. Putting a process like this in place would

provide a limited systematic reduction of tax during times of good economic growth and remove some of the politics from the process.

4. Construction and maintenance of an efficient transportation system is a proper function of state and local government. I support a modest increase of fuel tax for state & local highways, acting on the promised loaded mile tax for trucks, and an inflation index for fuel tax providing a revenue stream correlating to the cost of construction and maintenance.

5. A House Concurrent Resolution requesting Congress to facilitate an accelerated work visa process for undocumented workers with a clean record who have existing employers willing to provide some form of sponsorship for them.

3 What was your single best contribution to the session? Maybe sponsoring a key bill or working behind the scenes on high-profile legislation. Tell us something you did that you're proud of.

Participating in and shaping the Education budget is particularly challenging and satisfying. As a Joint Finance Appropriations Committee member, it isn't just a matter of appropriating the 100+ budgets before us, but of prioritizing and spending money as effectively as possible.

4 What will be your focus over the interim?

Early childhood development, mental health issues, promoting a work visa process, the reformation of the public school funding formula, the Big Wood delivery call, Fish & Game depredation claims process, the Nielson aquifer recharge project, constituent issues as they arise, and a great summer with family and friends.



Rep. Fred Wood, R

Rep. Wood did not participate.



Sen. Jim Patrick, R

Sen. Patrick did not participate.



COMMUNITY COLUMNIST

If the MOAB offends you, everything offends you

On occasion I'll stop at a local gas station and buy a big fat juicy hot dog branded as the Bahama Mama. (Before judging my dietary choices, just shut that little trap of yours until you've tried one, then we'll talk.) It wasn't until today that I realized my occasional Bahama Mama may be more than just nutritionally offensive. Fortunately, the gender-loaded branding hasn't



NEAL LARSON

piqued the interest of the cultural gender police just yet, as far as I can tell. (My apologies in advance if my column tips them off.) The gender police were actually busy this week

elsewhere: crying in their Perrier over the military using the nickname "Mother of All Bombs" for our military's largest non-nuclear explosive device. MOAB is actually an acronym for Massive Ordnance Air Blast, but that doesn't roll off the tongue quite as well. Hence, the nickname.

There were several social media examples cited in a Washington Post piece, but perhaps the most concise came from Twitter via "Not A Tory s" who tweeted "Why are we enforcing sexist gender roles on explosive ordnance?" A number of others expressed similar or connected offenses — robotic outrage that a gender term was used, and in a way not approved by THEM. My

first thought was actually envy, over the amount of time and emotional energy other people have to get worked up over such trivial crap. Seriously, if that offends them, anything will offend them. The second observation was that euphemisms are euphemisms because they have abandoned their literal origins, so we can all calm down.

Now, we might all need some social-media enforced sensitivity training if the military had called it the Barefoot and Pregnant Little Lady of All Bombs, or the Make Me a Sandwich, Woman, of All Bombs, or The Bomb that Doesn't Throw Like a Girl. It's the Mother of All Bombs, and the Mother of All (Whatever) is the one that commands respect. It's the gold standard, the one in charge and with the gravitas that forces everyone's attention. In other words, it's a compliment denoting respect — not an offense necessitating a collective involuntary gender studies seminar.

In the wake of this story I considered some euphemistic terms we use in everyday language. Motherboard. Mother Nature. Mother lode. Mother ship. Queen bee. Mankind. Oh boy! Oh man! And I'm sure there are more; that's just off the top of my head. No doubt there are lists compiled and curated of artificially offensive terms that need to be cleansed from the lexicon. Just recently NAU student Cailin Jeffers had her grade reduced by her professor after Jeffers used the

term "mankind" in a paper. You guessed it, that word is sexist, oppressive, and anti-woman.

Have you noticed that it's never really explained beyond vague and murky gobbledygook how the terms "mankind" or "mother of all _____" are actually oppressive? You're just expected to agree with the jargon, nod your head, and join their not-fully-explained cause of making the genders so equal they are precisely identical. So identical, in fact, we must stop saying either "he" or "she" and instead use "ze," "xe" or now the confusing "they." Makes one wonder if the goal is gender erasure, not gender equality.

There is a robust effort underway on college campuses, in journalism, and in some governments to eradicate gender pronouns from common use. But it won't be limited to pronouns. Gender-laced euphemisms — complementary or benign — are under the knife as well.

Boy, seems we've hit the biggest grand-daddy mother lode of irrationality in the history of mankind, and that's all she wrote!

Associated Press award-winning columnist Neal Larson of Idaho Falls is also the author of "Living in Spin." He is a conservative talk show host on KID Newsradio 590 AM, 106.3 and 92.1 FM, and also at www.kid-newsradio.com. "The Neal Larson Show" can be heard weekday mornings from 8 to 10. His email address is neal@590kid.com.

MODERN LIFE

Librarians, the new warriors

Quick: When a conversation about librarians springs up — not likely to happen, but work with me here — what kind of person pops into your mind? Someone quiet, timid, with horned-rim glasses, and who's



CHRIS HUSTON

favorite word is "shush." Someone inordinately fond of cardigan sweaters. Above all, bookish. Who would have thought that these quiet curators of our collective human consciousness

are now commanding the front lines in what may be one of the great battles of our modern age — the battle to clearly discern what is actually, factually, true.

Most of us understand it's our differences of opinion that drive us to different corners of the boxing ring. For example, who has the inside track when it comes to building a better society, Democrats or Republicans? That depends on your personal views — in other words, your opinions. But did one and a half million people attend the Trump inauguration on the National Mall? No. We can call that a fact.

But in a world where opinions shouted loudly enough become de facto facts by the folks who share the shouters' point of view, it's becoming almost impossible to even argue on the questions we're arguing about, let alone the answers.

Enter the librarians, courageous women and men uniquely qualified to guide you through the thicket of opinion-driven theories masquerading as facts

to something that can resemble undiluted, straightforward, take-it-to-the-bank factual accuracy.

As it turns out, those quiet librarians had to bust some serious chops before checking out your books.

Four year undergrad degree? Check. Grad school? Absolutely. Perhaps you wouldn't think you need a master's degree to stare down noisy teenagers hanging out behind the stacks, but an MA in library science is just part of the job. Because as it turns out, librarians do a lot more than memorize the Dewey decimal system.

Surprised? You're probably thinking that a librarian's job description must be getting shorter every year. In a digital world, aren't librarians just dinosaurs-in-waiting? After all, since the answer to every question is only a Google search away, who needs help anymore finding the Readers Guide to Periodical Literature? (Kids, ask your parents about that one.)

But in the modern world the need for librarians is becoming more urgent, not less. Yes, these days we have instant access to endless content. But being buried in a word avalanche doesn't mean you're any closer to finding useful information. It's a needle in a haystack thing — facts are the needles, and the haystacks are getting larger every day. Extracting the quiet truth of facts from a white noise world is getting harder, not easier.

Lately I've struck up some conversations (quiet ones, of course) with librarians. It turns out they're still busy. You'll often find one working with high

school and college students who are grappling with the devastating discovery that a Google search is not the same thing as academic research. Librarians are the ones who help overwhelmed students evaluate the one million links generated by Google in 0.37 seconds to determine who's dealing with hard facts, and who's squishy around the edges.

Librarians are way ahead of us in understanding that the ability to calmly evaluate sources of information is becoming one of the key skills necessary to navigate modern life in an alternative fact world.

Where to begin? Start simple. The next time you're struggling to come up with another reason to turn off the television or computer screen, tell your kids that you're all going to the library. Once there, encourage your children to ask the librarian to help find a book about a subject they find interesting. Your kids will soak up the personal attention while discovering worlds they didn't know existed.

And over time you might even learn some things yourself — like how to be a more independent thinker who no longer has to rely on whoever has the most Twitter followers as you make up your mind based on the facts, not focus groups and echo chambers.

Can you learn all that from a librarian? You bet. But please keep your voice down while you're doing it.

Chris Huston is a former news director at KMVT. Connect with Chris on Facebook at Chris Huston-Modern Life, and at www.chrishuston-modernlife.com.