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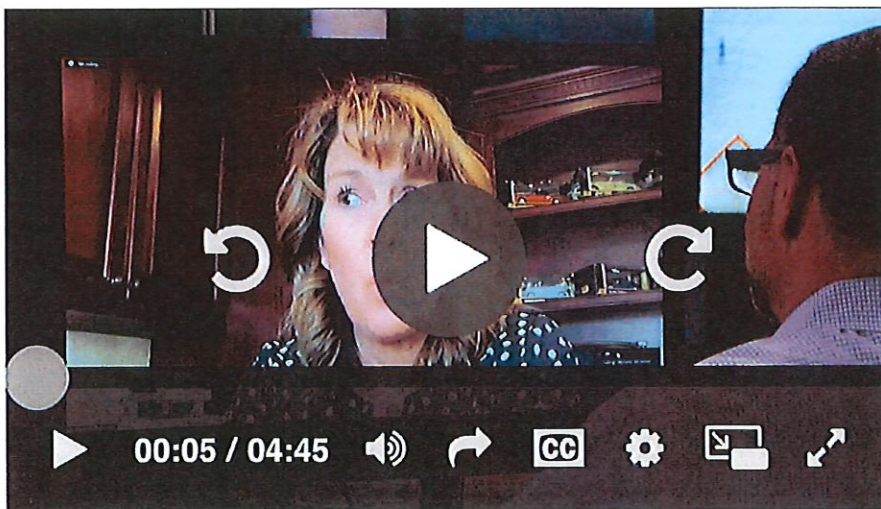
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Republican lawmakers speak out on 'special investigation committee'



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Bonneville GOP calls local legislators on the carpet

DAVID PACE

dpace@postregister.com

Three Bonneville County legislators — Rep. Wendy Horman, Rep. Stephanie Mickelsen, and Sen. Kevin Cook — have been requested to appear before a Legislative District 32 Committee to respond to allegations violations of the Republican Party Platform.

The hearing is set for 7 p.m. on Dec. 7.

The legislators have not been notified what the alleged violations are.

Horman said she was told she will not be notified of the specific complaints until she agrees to the rules for the meeting.

Cook said he will be facing four complaints, but that he was told one of the alleged violations was for his vote for the Idaho LAUNCH program.

"I will go before a Special Investigation Committee," Cook said. "They will give me my four complaints. I will have some time to write up my reasoning why I did what I did. I'll give that to them. They'll think about it, read it over and then we'll have a meeting to discuss it and they will vote whether they like what I did or whether I need to be sanctioned."

Mickelsen said she is recovering from major back surgery and can't leave her house. She doesn't plan to participate in the hearing.

"If the voters don't like me, they'll vote me out of office," Mickelsen said. "I feel like I'm doing a good job. I'm taking the time to read the bills, so (county GOP) to basically be backseat driving legislators is ridiculous."

The hearings are implementing the new "Republican Party Platform Enforcement Rule" that the Idaho GOP passed on June 24 during its summer meeting in Challis. "The Idaho Republican State Central Committee, Legislative District Committees, and County Central Committees are hereby empowered to call into question the conduct of a Republican elected official; give fair consideration to alleged violations and provide a meaningful opportunity for the official to be heard, determine if substantive violations of Party Platform or Constitutions have occurred; provide censure and/or guidance upon the first determination of substantive violations; and for any substantive violations by the same elected official occurring after the first determination has issued ... may remove Party support and prohibit the use of Republican Party identifiers on campaign information and advertising from the elected official during their current term and any subsequent campaign for political office for a period of five (5) years," the rule states.

The Bonneville County Republican Central Committee has three Legislative District Committees consisting of all the elected precinct committee officers from that district. District 32 has 17 precinct committee officers (PCOs), Bonneville County GOP Chairman Nick Contos said.

The District 32 Legislative District Committee holding the hearing will be composed of these elected PCOs or their assistants.

"That's in an unbiased atmosphere. The whole purpose of doing any investigation is to try to understand both sides of (the issue)," Legislative District 32 Chairman Doyle Beck said. "...

It's got nothing to do about a gotcha. ... It's purely a back-and forth to understand each other better."

The final rules for the hearing have not been adopted, so it has not been determined whether or not the public can attend, Contos said. Discussions are ongoing between legislators and the committee as to the hearing's format and how much time legislators and those making allegations will be allocated to present their cases, Beck said. All rules must ultimately be approved by the committee.

"This is not a court trial and is not intended to be a court trial," Contos said. "It's intended to be a concern when precinct officers that make up the party are concerned that the elected officials are not following the platform that they had signed up for. They have every right as citizens to ask what's going on and what can we do about that. Then the party has a right to speak too. If the party doesn't like the way a representative is voting, the party can and should speak up about that — issue a public censure or statement or things like that."

After the first hearing is held, the committee will come to a decision about the appropriate action to take.

"They could vote to ... simply thank the elected official for their time and their explanations," Contos said. "They could issue a public statement recommending that the elected official vote differently next time. They could issue a public censure, which is nonbinding but is a statement of where they stand."

If the elected official is called before the body for a second hearing, the consequences are more severe.

"If the same elected official continues down that path and it continues to be a problem, the process can happen again and on a second round, the body can remove that elected official's ability to use the Republican logo in future campaigns," Contos said.

Beck said the Legislative District Committee that he is chairman of is simply enforcing party rules in holding the hearing, specifically the "Integrity in Affiliation" rule in which Republican candidates affirm to the state party whether or not, "I support the Idaho Republican Party Platform and accept it as the standard by which my performance as a candidate and as an officeholder should be evaluated."

group.

"I read the bills, I do my homework. I listen to anyone that contacts me, and I vote," Horman said. "I am happy to go explain any of my votes to them or to anyone else. ... I will be happy to listen to their concerns both before and after I vote, but I will not be intimidated into voting a particular way under threat because of threats. That's never how I've worked, and I will not be changing that."

Whatever the committee decides, she said she will continue to represent those who elected her.

"You make the best decisions you can with the information that you have, after doing your homework. ... I will continue to use the same process I have now to evaluate bills and make my voting decisions on behalf of all the people in my district," Horman said.

Addressing BCRCC allegations — voters should decide

As a dedicated legislator, I proudly serve the people of Legislative District 32. I'm committed to fostering transparency, accountability and open dialogue that welcomes input from all members of the public. I don't expect everyone to agree with every vote I make.

In September, Doyle Beck, chairman of Legislative District 32, informed me of four complaints filed against me under new state party rules passed last summer because of my voting record. These complaints required appearing before a Special Investigative Committee. He would only disclose the hearing date and details of the allegations if I agreed to their rules.

Over the next month, we negotiated via email. The rules were convoluted and contradictory. They included no guarantee the public could see the entire proceeding. I considered this point a dealbreaker.

Despite failing to reach an agreement, I received an email from Mr. Beck expressing gratitude for my contributions to the rules. He also notified me that I had two weeks to prepare for the SIC hearing on Nov. 30. To my surprise, the email included a 40-page attachment outlining 10 allegations (not four) signed by Carolyn Harrison, John Jensen, Rusty Devereaux and Lisa Keller. Once again, the rules came with no guarantee of a public forum.

As a result, I notified Mr. Beck I would not participate in their SIC tribunal. Today, I'll tell you the same thing I shared with a local reporter: The trial's outcome will not influence my future voting decisions. I vote using a deliberate process. First, I assess if legislation aligns with my core values. Second, I evaluate its constitutionality. Finally, I gauge my constituents' sentiments.

I don't have space to discuss all 10 allegations. But I want to share my explanation for three. 1. Idaho Launch: I voted for H24/S1167, which expands an existing program already showing results. On average, participants increased their take-home pay from \$22,000/ year to \$38,000/year, helping individuals and families become community contributors. This bill opened the program to Idaho high school graduates and created access to career training that requires more than a high school diploma. Idaho Launch represents another way for our state to produce a well-trained workforce, a critical resource Idaho's businesses need to thrive.

2. Idaho presidential primary: H138 consolidated the March presidential primary election with the May primary. The state GOP was in full support until the vote. I supported saving \$2.5 million and still providing a primary for Idaho voters. Instead, Chairwoman Dorothy Moon has used consolidation as an excuse to force a presidential caucus. It will limit participation and cut tens of thousands of Idahoans out of the presidential nominating process.

3. Private school funding: I voted against S1038 (Freedom in Education Savings Accounts). The bill stated, "A qualified school shall not be required to alter its creed, practices, admissions policy, or curriculum in order to accept students whose parents pay tuition or fees from a freedom in education savings account." In other words, Idaho can pay millions of dollars to privately owned schools and

yet have no say in the curriculum or accountability for the outcome. I cannot, in clear conscience, give away taxpayer money to any organization without oversight.

As James Madison wrote, "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives." You deserve to know how I represented you. Under the Idaho Constitution, I'm accountable to my voters every two years. Next May, I will stand for reelection. The voters should decide whether I represent them appropriately, not a small group meeting in secret.

Sen. Kevin Cook represents District 32 (Bonneville County) in the Idaho Senate. He also serves as chairman of the Commerce and Human Resources Committee.

Opinion: Government of, by and for the people

- REP. WENDY HORMAN | Guest columnist Jul 4, 2023

Recently I attended a town hall where it was standing room only of citizens who are deeply concerned about the direction of our country. Children and youth, young professionals, and those with decades of experience — they all came to voice their concerns, ask questions and find out what they can do to preserve the Idaho and America that our founders gifted to us.

Being a politician is not for the faint of heart, but being a citizen isn't either. It was so encouraging to be surrounded by courageous citizens who care deeply about our state and nation.

Fans of Max Lucado will recognize the story of Punchinello and Lucia. They lived in a society that judged others for their accomplishments by putting golden star stickers or gray dot stickers on each other.

And yes, gold means good, gray means bad.

Punchinello was covered in gray dots.

But one person, Lucia, had no stickers. Even when people tried to put golden star stickers on her, they fell off. They wouldn't stick.

It's fictional, but not really.

Every day, we judge one another — based on our clothing, our cars, our titles, our money or lack thereof, which clubs we belong to, etc.

As a member of the Idaho House of Representatives, I am labeled and scored by a variety of groups who judge me based on their interests, not yours.

I have a vast collection of political gold stars and gray dots. But they don't stick. Because they can't define who I am as a person or as your representative.

It is your interests I seek to represent, not theirs.

Can I be informed by the expertise of some of these coalitions? Can I listen to their perspective? Absolutely.

Would I ever cede the vote you have entrusted me with as your representative to them? Absolutely not.

Rarely will a single "sticker," a single vote, or a single grade define a politician or a person. The good and bad deeds we do often accumulate more to our inner character than our outer appearance.

Thank you for caring enough about government to attend a town hall, to reach out to me during the legislative session, by email, phone, social media or in person. I can't represent your interests if I don't know what they are. Your role as a citizen is as critical as mine in preserving our state and nation.

Despite the mocking and labeling politicians sometimes experience, I still consider it a tremendous privilege to serve in the Idaho Legislature, to be a

small part of this uniquely American form of government gifted to us by our Founding Fathers and mothers.

Let us all continue to do everything in our power to defend the gift they sacrificed to establish, to defend our sacred Constitution and the freedoms it grants so "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Republican Rep. **Wendy Horman** of Idaho Falls represents District 30B in the Idaho Legislature.

PURITY TEST

Bonneville County GOP discusses 'tectonic' rule changes

DAVID PACE

dpace@postregister.com

The Bonneville County GOP Central Committee presented the Idaho GOP party's newly adopted rules and resolutions to precinct committee officers and other interested residents during its Thursday meeting at the Shilo Inn.

"There were some significant rules that happened. These are like the equivalent of tectonic plate shifting in the party," said Bryan Smith, Bonneville County GOP state committeeman.

The rules passed at the Idaho GOP's summer meeting from June 23 — 24 in Challis. Rule 2023-8, titled the "Idaho Republican Party Platform Enforcement" rule, said, "the Idaho Republican State Central Committee, Legislative District Committees, and County Central Committees are hereby empowered to call into question the conduct of a Republican elected official; give fair consideration to alleged violations and provide a meaningful opportunity for the official to be heard; determine if substantive violations of Party Platform or Constitutions have occurred; provide censure and/or guidance upon the first determination of substantive violations; and for any substantive violations by the same elected official occurring after the first determination has issued and following the same procedures outlined below, may remove Party support and prohibit the use of Republican Party identifiers on campaign information and advertising from the elected official during their current term and any subsequent campaign for political office for a period of five (5) years."

The rule allows the committees to censure elected Republican officials who do not vote in line with the party platform, and, after multiple violations, remove their ability to run as Republicans.

"This got passed because there are a lot of public officials — senators, legislators, congressmen, and also constitutional officers — who will run as Republicans and then vote for things like Medicaid expansion or they'll vote for, over nine years, a \$1 billion program for high school seniors," Smith said. "They vote for things such as keeping porn in the libraries, or they won't override the governor's veto. These things, people have good reasons for voting for that — they always have good reasons — but it's rubbing the grassroots the wrong way."

On June 24, the Idaho Republican Party State Central Committee passed a resolution issuing a vote of no confidence in Gov. Brad Little and 14 Republican legislators — including state Reps. Rod Furniss, Jerald Raymond and Stephanie Mickelsen who voted against the HB 314 veto override. HB 314 would have required libraries and schools to restrict minors' access to materials deemed harmful, the Idaho Press previously reported, but some legislators questioned the bill's application of civil penalties against

libraries and believed that local officials should have control to resolve concerns rather than the state.

Not all local elected officials agree with the procedures the new rules implement.

“The best way to remove a candidate that doesn’t reflect the values of the community that they serve is at the ballot box,” said Mickelsen of Idaho Falls. “The people in leadership in the Republican Party forget that your voters elect the officials, and then, based upon the qualities and the items in specific bills, they expect their elected officials to thoughtfully review that bill and if there are problems, to vote for or against it.”

The new rules outline that a hearing on an elected official may occur at a regular committee meeting or a special meeting.

“I think a lot of people are envisioning a tribunal, and to some extent, they may be confronted with tough questions,” said Bonneville County GOP Chairman Nick Contos.

“But the way I see this rule is more of a procedure that encourages party organizations, whether it’s at the state, or legislative district or the county, to follow a little bit of a process ... of how the volunteers that make up the party should approach a potential concern if their elected official is going completely contrary to the principles that they understand in the platform that they elected that person to try to advance.

“... It allows the party to assert itself, one to communicate directly with that elected official, but also to speak publicly and to speak out if they’re unable to resolve it and unable to reach some common ground with their nominee.”

A U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative for Idaho or an Idaho State constitutional officer can be called to the Republican State Central Committee meeting to answer the alleged violations after the Idaho Republican State Central Committee receives a petition to the state chairman from 20% of central committee members in at least five counties, the rule says.

State legislators may be brought before an Idaho Legislative District Committee after a petition is submitted by 20% of Legislative District Committee members. Rule 2023-25 says that the committee is composed of a legislative district chairman, vice chairman, secretary and precinct committeemen and committeewomen from that district elected in the state primary.

A county’s central committee can call in an elected county official to answer alleged violations with a petition from 20% of county central committee members.

Smith expressed support for the party’s right to enforce its platform.

“If the only reason you’re running as a Republican is simply because you want to get a Republican vote, but you don’t want to follow the platform, somebody needs to call you out on that, and who better than the Republican Party?” Smith said.

The 'SIC 'Em' Committee

Carrie: Did you know a list of grievances has been filed against all six Republican legislators from Idaho Falls districts 32 and 33?

Jerry: By whom? **Carrie:** The Bonneville County Republican Central Committee. Their legislative chairs appointed a "Special Investigative Committee" to make sure legislators are voting the way the BCRCC interprets the party platform.

Jerry: Did they really name their committee "SIC"? The definition of "sic 'em" is "to incite or urge to attack." Why do this?

Carrie:

At the 2023 IDGOP state summer central committee meeting, they passed new rules making loyalty to the party bosses more important than loyalty to us voters. Article XX says that party bosses can investigate whether Republican elected officials are adhering to their interpretation of the party platform.

Jerry: What happens if "SIC 'em" finds them guilty?

Carrie: The first outcome is "censure and guidance." But if they're hauled on the carpet and found guilty again, party bosses claim they can remove their Republican affiliation and disallow them from running on the Republican ticket.

Jerry: Are our local legislators participating in their hearings?

Carrie: No. I've heard from all of them. One of their main objections is that the process is being hidden from the public. As Rep. Wendy Horman said, "I made my votes in public, I will respond to those votes in public."

Jerry: Sounds like a star chamber. **Carrie:** What's that? **Jerry:** It's a secret or closed meeting held by an executive body that seems grossly unfair or used to persecute an individual.

Carrie: "Inquisition" comes to my mind. Some legislators mentioned they'd only be given one minute (which was changed to five) to respond to grievances. Yet the "SIC 'em" committee has no such limitations.

Jerry: What do the grievances look like? **Carrie:** One grievance is that most local legislators voted to fund Idaho's share of the WWAMI program. That's a joint medical program with the University of Idaho and the University of Washington School of Medicine. It's where Idaho students learn to become MDs, something we badly need in our state.

Jerry: What's wrong with that? **Carrie:** They accuse the University of Washington of promoting LGBTQ issues among other sins.

Jerry: Sounds like the work of the Idaho Freedom Foundation?

Carrie: You bet! Among the listed violations are low Idaho Freedom Foundation scores. In their official “alleged violations” document, they describe the Idaho Freedom Foundation as an “accurate, independent source for liberty-minded policy, etc.”

Jerry: What a joke! Local Republican party bosses Doyle Beck and Bryan Smith are board members of the Idaho Freedom Foundation. They’re the ones setting the Freedom Foundation’s policies. So much for independence!

Carrie: A better name for Freedom Foundation rankings is “obedience scores.”

Jerry: Why is the BCRCC fixated on purity rules?

Carrie: Lately, BCRCC-supported candidates have lost big at the polls. In District 32, their candidates were soundly defeated by mainstream conservative Reps. Wendy Horman, Stephanie Mickelsen and Sen. Kevin Cook. In District 33, their candidates lost to Rep. Marco Erickson and Sen. Dave Lent. The only winning legislator they support is Rep. Barb Ehardt and they’re even calling her on the carpet.

Jerry: I thought they liked Barb? **Carrie:** According to Barb: “I was genuinely shocked to learn of this. It appears the main thing for which I’m being censured are my votes in favor of educational spending. For my constituents, education is a top priority.”

Jerry: So, their end game is to get our legislators to answer to them, not us voters. Otherwise, they’ll kick them out of the party?

Carrie: Correct. Did you know the chair of the District 32 “SIC ‘em” is BCRCC Treasurer Barbara Miller? She lost twice at the polls in the last two years. But it appears District 32 Legislative Chair Doyle Beck is actually calling the shots.

Jerry: Sounds more like a Politburo than a democratic republic. Reminds me of an old saying, “In order to remain true to oneself, one ought to renounce one’s party three times a day.”

Jerry is a retired farmer/rancher and native Idahoan. **Carrie** is a retired nonprofit administrator.