

House Highlights

By Tom Loertscher

There has been a steady flow of people through this place during the last week wanting to visit about a wide range of topics. Discussions have concerned everything from Health Care Exchanges to elections to redistricting, and funding for the disabled and mentally ill. And of course everyone wants a commitment as to what I am thinking on these matters. For most of these things it is a bit early to tell because there have been no details fleshed out.

That does not seem to be the case with redistricting because a new plan was adopted late last Friday. There has been very little analysis done yet as the effects of this latest attempt and that will come about early in the week. It is a bit distressing that this was done so quickly with very little if any opportunity for our citizens to see what was being proposed. In our case our district, under this proposal, (it now includes Oneida County) has grown geographically to the extreme. One of my friends quipped that while travelling to the southern end of the district, I would have to choose from leaving I-15 at McCammon, Downey or Malad.

There are some other districts that are as bad, one of which goes from the Montana Border almost to the Oregon border. Traveling from Challis to Emmett could take as long as nine hours. Another one that includes a narrow neck of land to join two counties where there is nothing but forest and mountains and no roads. Does the word gerrymandering come to mind? As the dust settles, there is bound to be plenty said about this one.

The pace is picking up with more bills being introduced and some minor ones that have passed the House and sent to the Senate. One controversial item that went to the Senate last week, was the bill to prohibit camping on the Capital Mall and other such places. It had three committee meetings of hearings in State Affairs and was vigorously debated on the floor of the House. It was interesting to hear the testimony of the people wanting to occupy the premises who said that they were not being heard when everyone who wanted

to testify was allowed to speak. So if the bill actually becomes law, if I were you, I would not plan on camping across the street from the capital. I will have to admit that it has not been on my list of destination campgrounds anyway.

I had occasion over the weekend to spend a little time around one of my grandsons that lives in the house next door. I couldn't help but wonder how the US and Idaho will look to him when he is his dad's age. So I will close with a line I saw on a poster that was titled Mercy. It went something like this. **Teach every child you meet the importance of forgiveness. It's our only hope of surviving their wrath once they realize just how badly we've messed things up for them.**