

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

— First Amendment to the United States Constitution

Whose opinion is getting ink

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|------------------------------|-------|
| • Reader letters: | 739 |
| • Local columnists: | 119 |
| • Guest columnists: | 131 |
| • Other papers: | 74 |
| • Our View (editorials): | 179 |
| • Syndicated columnists: | 92 |
| • Year's total as of Oct. 8: | 1,334 |
| • Current letters backlog: | 24 |

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2009



OPINIONS

Post Register editorial board members are **Roger Plathow**, publisher; **J. Robb Brady**, publisher emeritus; and **Corey Taule**, Opinions Page editor

The Post Register seeks to provide diverse, relevant and thoughtful opinions on this page. We caution that opinion writing is often provocative and readers may find some material aggravating.

CHEERS & JEERS

Post Register editorial board members are **Roger Plathow**, publisher; **J. Robb Brady**, publisher emeritus; and **Corey Taule**, Opinions Page editor

Getting a dialogue started

CHEERS to Ammon Mayor Bruce Ard for finally speaking out on the seemingly never-ending controversy about who has paid for what to improve Hitt Road.

On this page Tuesday, Ard wrote that his city has paid for 60 percent of all Hitt Road improvements since 2001, when Ammon and Idaho Falls agreed to split future road construction and improvement costs.

Idaho Falls disputes Ammon's numbers. We'd expect nothing else. But one of Ard's complaints was that Idaho Falls had not come forward with specifics of its own. That could happen soon.

At a work session Wednesday, Idaho Falls Mayor Jared Fuhriman and the City Council decided to draft a response to Ard's op-ed piece. That's a good thing. The more the entities talk — or write — this out, the closer we'll all be to the truth. Ard's figures may or may not be correct. That remains to be seen. But at least by stepping out and writing for publication, Ard jump-started a conversation that should have been taking place all along.

JEERS to the Twin Falls Republican Central Committee. Here's the problem with bad ideas: Sometimes they take root and spread.

Recently, the Bonneville County GOP voted to endorse candidates in nonpartisan races. And so the new political reality is that the local GOP is sticking its nose where few outside their echo chamber think it belongs.

Inexplicably, some in the Twin Falls GOP think that's a good idea. A decision could come as soon as this week.

We've said it before and we'll continue to say it: Political parties have no business in nonpartisan races. We don't need Democratic or Republican litmus tests for offices which, by law, are designated nonpartisan. Let's hope the Twin Falls GOP comes to its senses and steers clear of this mess.

JEERS to Ammon City Council candidate Russell Slack.

Slack has neither sought nor received the GOP's endorsement in this race for a four-year term on Seat No. 2. But Slack is certainly willing to let the voting public in on his political preferences.

Slack's campaign signs, which can be found throughout Ammon, feature the familiar three-starred Republican elephant symbol.

Slack is perfectly within his First Amendment rights to use the elephant on his campaign signs. And the voters would be perfectly within their rights to hold it against him.

CHEERS to those involved in building a new pathway for students to walk and ride their bikes on a particularly difficult stretch of South Pancheri Drive. The city of Idaho Falls paid for the two paths, which cost \$91,000, but will be reimbursed by a national program that pays for projects that help kids get to school safely. Also involved was the Bonneville Metropolitan Planning Organization and Community Pathways.

Keeping kids safe is, of course, a worthwhile goal. A safe route may also inspire more parents to let their kids walk or bike to school. This one's a winner all the way around.

Saying goodbye to a friend

Idaho lost a good man Saturday when Blackfoot Morning News Managing Editor Chuck Oxley died in a car accident.

Chuck was just 46 when he lost his life. But those he worked with at The Associated Press, Idaho State Journal and Idaho Statesman will not soon forget his gregarious nature and booming laugh.

The Air Force brought Chuck to Idaho. For a couple of years, he left journalism to work for the Idaho Democratic Party. But

JEERS to former Idaho U.S. Sen. Larry Craig, who now makes his living asking for stuff from the body he served in for decades.

Craig isn't officially a lobbyist. Federal revolving door legislation does not yet permit that. But Craig can happily work behind the scenes at New West Strategies to convince the feds to build a federal prison in the Magic Valley. For \$5,000 a month. Everyone has to make a living and Craig is not the first ex-Congressman to turn to lobbying. But his skirting of federal law is distasteful, and the project is something many probably would prefer not to have in their backyard.

Craig's desire to turn a buck could backfire. It doesn't appear anyone has forgotten his less than glorious exit from Congress.

Burley City Councilman Dennis Curtis told the Twin Falls Times-News this week he has no interest in hiring Craig.

"Does he have the respect of people in Washington, D.C., to get the job done?" Curtis asked. "I question's Craig's morality."

CHEERS to Idaho's congressional delegation — Republicans Mike Crapo,

James Risch and Mike Simpson and Democrat Walt Minnick — for its unanimous support of a proposal that would require legislation be posted on the Internet 72 hours before it gets voted on.

The health care debate has polarized America and everything is viewed with suspicion. But this process was intended to be deliberative. And people on both sides of the health care debate have a vested interest in knowing the details.

The waiting period probably doesn't make sense for all bills. But health care has taken on a new dimension. When people don't know the details, they tend to fill those gaps with rumor, innuendo, speculation and outright lies.

There's nothing wrong with making sure the public and politicians are sufficiently informed before a decision of this magnitude is made.

JEERS to the Bureau of Land Management for its decision

to bury the names of those who graze their cattle on public land. Two environmental groups filed suit recently in federal court to get the names. It never should have come to this. The groups first requested the information in 2007.

One year later, the BLM refused the request, saying the information fell under the same exemption that allows agencies to keep medical and personnel records secret.

Poppycock.

This is public land. The BLM is the agency we hire to act as the stewards of this land. Grazing permits are business transactions between individuals and the public. We have a right to know who we're doing business with.



Craig



Crapo



Risch



Simpson



Minnick

A public awareness campaign has helped Idaho make real progress in the fight against methamphetamine use, writes
Megan Ronk

Taking on the scourge



Megan Ronk
Guest columnist

Last year Idaho launched a groundbreaking campaign to prevent first-time methamphetamine use among our state's young people. When we started the Idaho Meth Project, the situation was grim. Our state was facing a devastating crisis because of methamphetamine. We ranked fourth in the country for meth use among teens, and the drug was destroying our communities.

With the launch of the Idaho Meth Project, we all joined together and took a dramatic step to combat this deadly drug. We began a statewide media campaign using innovative, visually striking advertisements. We combined the campaign with a far-reaching community outreach program in cities like Idaho Falls, where committed community partners and hundreds of volunteers are talking directly to our young people. As a result, teens throughout the state have gotten the message: "Not even once."

We are extremely grateful for the overwhelming show of support from Idaho Falls and communities like it throughout the state. Your commitment to getting the word out has helped bring us where we are today. The news is good, and we are making real progress. A survey of parents and young people revealed that one year after the launch of the Idaho Meth Project more than six out of 10 teens, and nearly eight out of 10 young adults, believe that trying meth is very risky. That is an increase of nearly 10 points from the year before. That change in attitude is a crucial step in preventing our young people from trying the drug.

One very important thing we have learned from our surveys is that the campaign has been an amazing catalyst for discussion. This has been especially true in Idaho Falls, where committed partners like Mountain View Hospital and Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center have played an invaluable role in stimulating dialogue in the community. Last year hundreds of parents and young people attended Free Family Forums hosted by these

"Methamphetamine is a hideous drug. Meth makes a person become paranoid, violent, and aggressive — making them a serious threat to society and law enforcement. And maybe more importantly, meth users are a threat to their own children and families."



DIRK KEMPTHORNE
former Idaho governor
and U.S. Interior secretary

generous institutions. The response to the events was overwhelming, with every attendee walking away moved by the stories they heard, and armed with valuable information about methamphetamine use.

On Tuesday, Oct. 13, Idaho Falls will host another Free Family Forum at the Colonial Theater. Attendees will have an opportunity to hear the emotional story of a local family and how their lives were impacted by their young daughter's methamphetamine use. Parents and teens will also have an opportunity to speak with health care experts and law enforcement officials. Most importantly, the event will be another chance to talk to friends and neighbors about how we can all work together to take a stand against meth. We hope you will join us.

Ronk is executive director of the Idaho Meth Project.

We welcome reader letters of 250 words or fewer as long as they are local, won't get us sued and if addressing theology, do so only in the context of public policy debates. We strongly encourage letter writers to use a civil tone and refrain from the use of epithets or name-calling. You must include your last name and either your first name or first and middle initials. The letter also must include an address and daytime phone number, which we use to verify authorship but keep confidential. E-mailed letters are preferred. If faxed or mailed, letters should be typed. Priority will usually be given to shorter and timely letters. **Send your letters to letters@postregister.com or Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 1800, Idaho Falls, ID 83403.**

THE ROUND FILE: Letters we haven't run (and why)

• Author retracted letter: 15 • Author unverifiable: 22 • Excessive lawsuit risk: 4 • Letter violated policy guidelines: 20 • Nonlocal author/topic: 32 • Year's total: 93

YOURVIEWS

Have something to say about a letter? Voice your thoughts at www.postregister.com/posttalk.

Rights and obligations

Received Oct. 1, cleared Oct. 7

A guarantee of personal behavior is a right: speech, religion, life, liberty, etc.

Help for others is instituted by a majority of the people as an obligation: schools, highways, shelter, police, etc. (Word count: 31)

DAVID KOELSCH
Idaho Falls

Kudos to Dr. Krell

Received Oct. 5, cleared Oct. 7

Kudos to Dr. Ken Krell's guest editorial on Oct. 1. If anyone can speak with a bird's-eye view to the current health care system and the need for reform, it is Dr. Krell. The waste and inefficiency of our current system is legendary. It seems the rich just keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer. Please, let us stop the fear-mongering and the blame game and let us have a quality health care system for all of the people all of the time. (Word count: 86)

MADELEINE KOEPPEN
Idaho Falls

In defense of Harding-Thomas

Received Oct. 5, cleared Oct. 7

I am writing in regards to the news article that ran in the Oct. 30, edition of the paper titled "School Official Placed on Leave" by Samantha Pak. In this article, a

few disgruntled teens attending Taylor's Crossing Public Charter School express their outrage in the fact that a beloved administrator leaves the school. I am sure this person is a great educator who is obviously respected by the students. However, this article led readers to believe that the administrator, Gail Harding-Thomas, was unqualified to handle the small student population of TCPCS and that the school is the scene of "chaos" and confusion. This administrator brings approximately 42 years of educational experience to TCPCS and is certainly qualified to manage the student population of TCPCS. In my experience, the environment of TCPCS is not the scene of disorganization as these passionate youth suggest. I have personally witnessed the great educational experience that TCPCS has brought to the lives of many children and their families.

The great thing about schooling options is the opportunity for students, educators and families to find the educational environment that best fits their needs. It opens up options so valuable time, effort and resources are not wasted to exert erroneous claims. I would hope that these unhappy teens would exercise their rights to school choice by leaving, giving others the opportunity to be part of the great school culture at TCPCS. (Word count: 234)

REBECCA BOHMAN
Idaho Falls