

Our City

I spent last Wednesday through Saturday in Twin Falls on the CSI campus. Sometimes my day job truly does overlap with my mayoral duties. Last week was one of those times. Thirty-five FFA members, our second Ag teacher Emily Fisher, my student teacher Daniel Heikkila, and I were on the CSI campus as the students were there to compete for six state championships and one State FFA Office. The FFA members performed exceedingly well. Nine qualified for national competitions; but that is not the focus of this column.

As I was walking on the CSI campus between venues where FFA members were competing, I happened upon Senator Burt Brackett from Three Creek, Idaho (Rogerson). Most of you have no reason to know Senator Brackett; but I assure you he impacts every one of your lives. Currently, Senator Brackett is the chair of the Senate Transportation Committee and if you have driven around town lately you will immediately recognize the significance of his position. I have had the pleasure of working with Senator Brackett on issues regarding transportation, education and agriculture. His contributions to all three are significant and I truly appreciate that about him.

After talking about the successes of his grandson, a senior FFA member at Kuna, we immediately began talking politics and the mess that it has become. I wrote previously about how in my opinion some politicians seem to be in the business for nefarious reasons. I can assure you Senator Brackett is not one of those. His heart is in the right place and he does the best he can for our State in a business where not all seem to be there for that reason. As we began talking about transportation his mood became darker. During the waning hours of this year's legislative session he managed to eek through a senate bill that would provide for disaster relief and ongoing maintenance funding for Idaho's communities and their streets. The bill managed its way through the House of Representatives and now sits on Governor Otter's desk for authorization. A nice happy ending...may be in jeopardy.

It seems Governor Otter is not fond Idaho's communities receiving the 40% of the surplus eliminator funds that Senator Brackett's bill calls for; Otter would prefer that all funds go to the Idaho Department of Transportation. Senator Brackett indicated that the transportation bill may be vetoed or it may just continue to sit on the governor's desk and automatically go into effect due to the lack of action by the governor. I am not sure how that happens, but apparently it gives the governor the ability to allow something to occur without his direct involvement; a way of authorizing something you don't personally support, I guess.

Further into the conversation Senator Brackett told me that matching federal funds for the State's declared disaster relief, due to extreme winter weather, will not be forthcoming. I am not sure where the State's needs fit into the whole Trumponian one trillion dollar infrastructure promise or if it does at all. I, like Senator Brackett, remain disheartened at the lack of political will of so many to do the best they can for our crumbling communities and infrastructure.

A spreadsheet and photographic evidence remains on my desk awaiting my ability to request disaster relief. A few weeks ago I wrote that the total cost of repairs to our streets was over \$450,000; as the streets and the base underneath them have begun to dry that total has now

eclipsed \$750,000. Our streets like our like our political system are deteriorating around us. In Idaho for decades now and as of January nationally fingers can't be pointed at the "other side of the aisle" conservatives own both stages. They too own the sorry state we find ourselves in as our long-established infrastructure continues to decay and crumble, while much needed new and improved systems of conveyance languish in inaction for a lack of political will.

As mayor I have a luxury of sorts in that I don't have to bow to the pressures of a political affiliation; I just have to do what I think is right by you. As I have talked to those like Senator Brackett and our own Senator Guthrie I truly believe it is a luxury. In the end, I am not sure where the general lack of political initiative will leave us as a community other than most likely having to rob Peter to pay Paul. Unfortunately, Paul barely gets by as it is.

All-in-all both Senator Brackett and I were discouraged as we shook hands and parted ways. I was glad he and I had the successes of his grandson and my students to focus on as those of our State and National governments left us both wanting.

Until next week...