

Our City

Prior to last Thursday I had been gone for almost 12 straight days. I wish I could say I had been hiking, fishing or otherwise recreating but I can't. I was in Indianapolis judging National FFA applications and then in Boise learning how to be a better teacher at the annual Career and Technical Education summer conference. As you may know you can't be gone long and not expect more work to be piled on your desk when you return to the office. I had plenty of work waiting but I didn't expect one of the items I found waiting for me.

I have written previously about how I believe our words and actions matter and about how those representing us as elected officials set a certain tone and standard for our society. As Mayor I am not immune from the responsibility of civil discourse; thus while I have bemoaned the desecration of public and private property along with other misguided acts I have tried to refrain from taking much of what I deal with in this office as personal. And, while the item waiting for me on my City desk was not directed at me, it was directed at all of us as a community and a society.

What waited for me was a large manila envelope from the Intermountain Fair Housing Council (IFHC). It contained a well written letter, a photocopied flier and numerous pages on how to address harassment and hate. To the veteran of the United States military who found the flier on his windshield when parked at a local business and brought it to the attention of the IFHC I thank you for your service and continued social conscience. I especially applaud your willingness to defend our country and rights it affords each of us.

Of course one of those rights all service men and women past and present fight to protect is our First Amendment Right which protects freedom of speech and the words espoused on the flier. The flier read in all caps "HELP OUT LAW ENFORCEMENT NATIONAL FEDERAL HOT LINE FOR THE DEPORTATION OF ILLEGALS PHONE X-XXX-XXX-XXXX WWW.XXX.XXX REPORT ILLEGALS AND THE CRIMINALS THAT EMPLOY THEM TAKE BACK OUR COUNTRY AND OUR JOBS MANDATORY JAIL TIME FOR THOSE WHO EMPLOY"

I withheld the actual phone number and website because if you share the same sentiment the flier depicts you will find them anyway and little if anything I could say would discourage you from doing so if you truly believe the words above. For those of you differently informed you may know that "illegals" are not here taking "our jobs" they are taking the jobs most "Americans" no longer are willing to do. As for reporting the "criminals that employ them" the employers I know in our community are law-abiding hard working folks who do the very best they can with the resources and workforce available to them.

I fully realize that my take on this situation may not sit well with some; presumably according to national statistics and polls about 33% of the whole agrees with the sentiment of the flier. I do not agree with the premises set forth in the flier, but I do respect the rights of those who do. But, you know what I believe and respect even more was what I witnessed firsthand as I watched the American Falls Day parade and the festivities that followed this past Saturday; all I saw was a community that welcomed the diversity of culture that we enjoy. I saw no "illegals," "criminals" or the 33% as I watched our community and guests celebrating what makes American Falls so special and still the best place to live.

Until next week...