

Carrying WT-E's water

Lori Millin willing to sponsor legislation to stay in WT-E good graces

There are a few issues about the push by the WT-E to get a recent member of their faux "editorial board" to introduce a bill during the next session to ban smoking in public places throughout the state.

First, it proves the contention on these pages that elected officials should know better than serve on any board of local media. Both sides should be concerned about the appearance of impropriety - in this case, the existence of impropriety, as evidenced by Lori Millin's acquiescence.

Let me once again state here: I hate smoking. Don't do it. Never have. No one in my immediate family smokes. Never have. I have lost close family members to the ravages of smoking. I would support a ban such as Rock Springs just passed - exempting bars and private clubs, places that would have to prohibit minors because of rule or statute.

If I were going to advocate a statewide ban, I would have taken a different path than

did the WT-E with Lori. And, vice versa.

The upcoming session of the Wyoming Legislature is a budget session and bills other than spending bills require a 2/3 majority to be introduced. Many, many non-spending bills will advance but this one is unlikely to see the light of day.

Lori Millin is a Democrat and she cannot muster many of the votes required. She is also a freshman and they are generally relegated to a "be seen and not heard" position in this Legislature.

The legislative committee responsible for such health issues just refused to move such a bill along. Lori carrying the already despised Cheyenne daily newspaper's water is not likely to set too well with those committee members - mostly Republicans, by the way. Even Mrs. Millin has expressed a little concern for the treatment of veterans who may have fought in combat for her right to impose this restriction on them. They may not like it either.

WyDOT. Now the State's most dysfunctional department.

"Sniffin" Bill Sniffin was onto something when he whined to the Governor about his treatment at the hands of WyDOT a couple years back.

When the Governor appointed a Director with a mail order degree, that didn't exactly improve things out there.

One of the great problems in a bureaucracy is the Andrew Jackson-introduced "spoils system." The candidate who prevails in an election can bring in friends, relatives and campaign supporters to fill critical positions and they, in turn, can perpetuate the abuse by hiring their friends, relatives and otherwise unqualified applicants to fill critical positions down the line.

Taxpayers have paid a real price for this practice and have paid even greater dollars in inefficiencies, turnover and unproductivity. This is not a recent phenomena - it has gone on since Old Hickory and will ever continue.

When incompetents and nincompoops fill high-level positions in government, you are apt to see letters that tell an employee the reason a decision has been made and will not be changed is "because I said so."

The Ben Peech story in the last issue of the Cheyenne Herald brought other stories of similar issues at the Wyoming Department of Transportation - not all within the Highway Patrol.

Basically, the picture painted was of a department which has been allowed to spiral out of control. Of a department that has supplanted the Parks and Cultural Resources department as the State's worst. The Governor has been made aware of problems but has chosen to remain detached and uninvolved. To be fair, he cannot and should not micromanage the state's department's but it all comes home to roost on his doorstep eventually - as it did on the Phil Noble generated settlement of \$250,000 to an employee who was wrongfully terminated - so the longer he allows it to foment, the higher the cost when a settlement is reached.

He chose to put a person in charge of WyDOT a couple years back who lacks the requisite education and skills to successfully manage such a large department. He is a poster boy for the Peter Principle and he has, it appears, surrounded himself with others who have reached their level of incompetence also.

One of those I have spoken with worked for the WHP and his advanced education at, and bachelor's degree from, the University of Wyoming was scoffed at and ridiculed. This from people whose boss would be someone whose bachelor's degree came from The International University, a Missouri unaccredited diploma peddler? What do they think of the quality and validity of his degree?

Right. They don't dare say. A common thread in all of this is that, at WyDOT, the

squeaking wheel does not get the grease - it gets the boot. And those who will not conform to a "Yes, sir!", "Yes, sir!" manner of compliance will be treated differently than those who will. WyDOT does not countenance anything resembling individuality or independence. You are obsequious or you are gone.

I recently sat down with another longtime employee of WyDOT - seven years. He has been passed over several times by less-qualified, less-educated, newly-hired employees of WyDOT. He claimed in a gender discrimination suit against WyDOT that women had gotten jobs in preference to him and that hiring committees making these decisions were usually dominated by female employees.

The State encourages employees to further their education. To do so while fully employed is a challenge and should be rewarded. At that department, there are other behaviors rewarded but advanced education is not necessarily one of them.

This fellow earned both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree while employed at WyDOT. According to a letter from the Attorney General's office to the Department of Employment, Division of Labor Standards, this employee had applied for 155 state jobs (promotions) and had been minimally qualified for 142 of them. Qualified for 142. Not all were within WyDOT - in fact only 25 were.

There is some disagreement as to exactly how many positions he had applied for within WyDOT over recent months but the AG's letter zeroed in on several, with full explanations as to why he was not chosen. Of the dozen given specific responses, the employee was said not to have been chosen to interview for seven of them because his "background, education and experience was not felt to be as strong as those possessed by other applicants ..." What the hell education did others have that he didn't - a PhD?

For those positions he was not interviewed, one hired a female and two of the three on the hiring committee were female. Another hired a female and the hiring committee was two men. A third showed "two females" were offered the position. The hiring committee consisted of three women. Another position was not filled - the hiring committee was two women. Another hired a female - the hiring committee was three women. Another did not hire anyone, the hiring committee was one man and one woman. Another was unfilled and had a male hiring manager. On each of the seven positions, this employee was shown to be "Qualified."

A common thread in the defenses as to why he was not offered positions was that he indicated "during his interview that he did not plan on remaining in the position very long, even if selected, because he was looking to move to a higher position within a short time." Others who did get jobs moved on. Did the truth hurt him?



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