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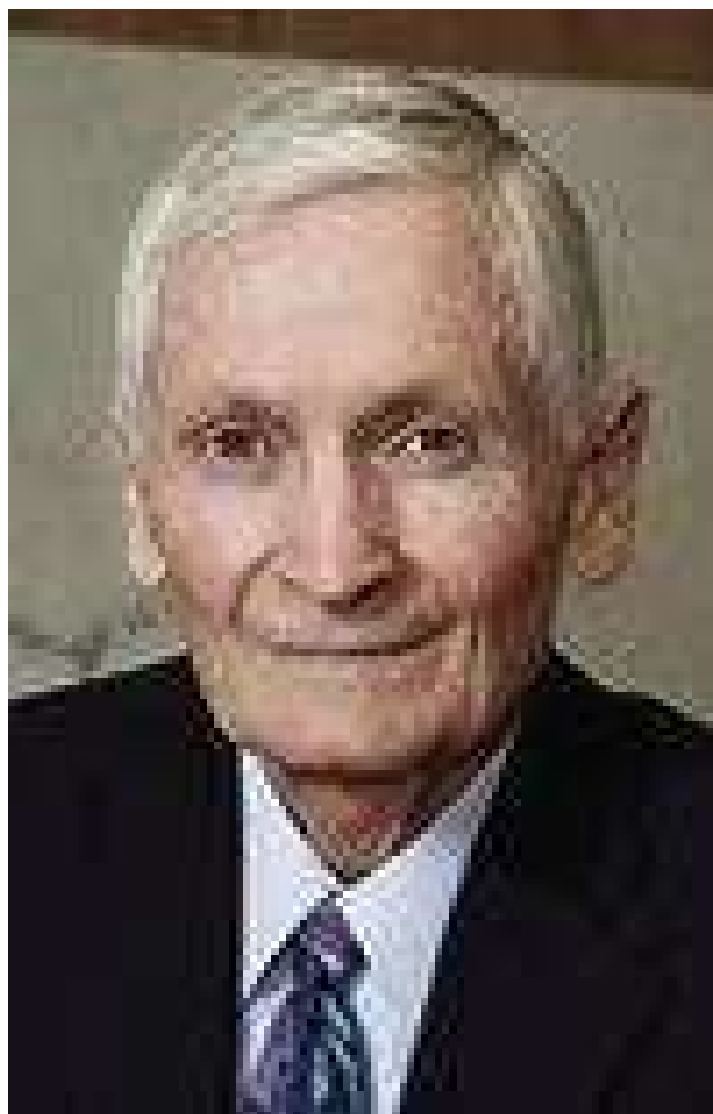
Opinion: Voters will soon have a chance to take Idaho back from the troublemakers

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Idaho's government has been plagued in recent years by many officeholders who are more interested in creating chaos and division than serving the public. The so-called Idaho Freedom Foundation and its followers have thrived on creating political discord by advancing legislation to address non-existent problems.

The primary example of ginning up non-issues to mislead the public and score political points is critical race theory. The Freedom Foundation crowd riled up folks last year with unfounded claims that critical race theory was being forced upon children in public schools from pre-K through college. In response, the Legislature enacted House Bill 377 to prohibit the teaching of critical race theory, although they could not seem to define what it was.

Because of the hysteria created by Freedom Foundation, university budgets were reduced by \$2.5 million.



An indoctrination task force convened by Jim Jones

two Freedom Foundation allies was

unable to find any credible evidence of critical race theory in Idaho, simply because it does not exist. Yet that has not stopped the Freedom Foundation bunch from continually brandishing it as a weapon against the public school system, which Freedom Foundation wants to replace with private and online schools.

This is the Freedom Foundation playbook. It and its legislators have not displayed much interest in addressing real problems confronting the state, like improving roads and bridges, or protecting and preserving Idaho's water and agricultural base, or other issues that are critical to our future. They merely set up hot-button non-issues and then furiously bat them down to get folks riled up in hopes of gaining voter support.

Freedom Foundation and its legislative allies joined in the national furor about election integrity during this legislative session, even though Idaho elections are highly regarded for honesty and efficiency. They advanced any number of bills to suggest that there were election irregularities that required fixing. Some would have eliminated ballot drop boxes, which are a real benefit for rural voters. Others made it harder for Idahoans to register and vote. One Freedom Foundation-supported bill, House Bill 439, would have prevented independent voters from registering as Republicans after March 11. It passed the House but not the Senate.

Election officials of both political parties from across the state were able to stop most of the unnecessary voter legislation, but Freedom Foundation and its followers were able to get what they craved — lots of free publicity for their unfounded claims of election irregularities.

Freedom Foundation often gives the impression of caring more about creating chaos and division as a means of gaining power than actually getting legislation passed. As soon as one issue has been milked for all it's worth, they are off to another fake issue, like social justice or transgender youth or whatever else might be the culture war issue of the day. They thrive on the turmoil created by their continual fight against imaginary problems.

The voters can put a stop to this needless, unproductive tumult in Idaho politics. Everyone who can should vote in the Republican primary on May 17. Every one of Idaho's more than 300,000 unaffiliated (independent) voters can register as a Republican, either through their county clerk or the Secretary of State's office. They can register in person at their voting location on election day.

A number of organizations make ratings or endorsements of candidates. Freedom Foundation has an index that gives top ratings to those who follow its every wish. Take Back Idaho, which I'm affiliated with, has candidate endorsements. One can find our endorsements by googling "Take Back Idaho." The two slates provide voters a stark choice between responsibility and dysfunction.

Jim Jones is a Vietnam combat veteran who served eight years as Idaho attorney general (1983-1991) and 12 years as a justice on the Idaho Supreme Court (2005-2017). He is currently a regular contributor to The Hill online news. He blogs at JJCommonTater.