



# The LEWISTON TRIBUNE

## Whose side is Donald Trump on, anyway?

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From the way Idahoans vote, you'd conclude that by and large they are able to care for themselves without any help from Uncle Sam.

President Donald Trump - the man who won 59.2 percent of Idaho's vote last November - is about to disabuse them of that notion.

Idahoans may vote Republican but they subsist on the Democratic programs.

Without the federal government, the state budget would be one-third smaller. That ranks Idaho's reliance on federal cash the 19th highest among the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

By contrast, some of the states that voted for Hillary Clinton - such as California and Washington - pay more of their own bills. Washington's state budget, for instance, relies on the federal government for about 29.2 percent of its resources.

When you throw in everything the federal government spends in Idaho - employees, contracts and installations - it ranks 17th in its dependence on the federal government.

The reason is simple: Idaho is immersed in poverty. It has fewer income taxes to share with the nation - and it has greater needs for federal assistance.

About 15 percent of Idahoans live in poverty - a far greater share than the proportion of poor people in Clinton states such as New Hampshire (8 percent), New Jersey (11 percent) and Washington (12 percent).

A greater percentage of Idaho's children live in poverty than in 24 states - many of them also reliably Democratic.

So when Trump proposes to slice \$3.6 trillion from the social safety net, who do you think might suffer most?

That's right - the same Idahoans who responded to Trump's promise to improve their lives.

Take Medicaid, for instance. More than 60 percent of the money Idaho spends on Medicaid comes from the federal government. Trump's budget would slash \$1 billion from the state account during the next decade. Here's who would be affected:

- Mothers and infants. Medicaid covers 39 percent - or about 9,000 - of the children born in the Gem State. Idaho's need for Medicaid is not as great as in the deep South. But it's far more than what you'll find in Democratic strongholds such as Massachusetts (27 percent) and Maryland (26 percent).
- Children. About 169,600 children - or nearly 40 percent of Idaho's youth - have health coverage thanks to Medicaid.
- Seniors. Medicaid helps 10 percent - or about 19,200 - of Idaho's elderly. And Idaho runs a lean program.
- Disabled. Some 22 percent of Idaho's disabled citizens - or 43,700 - draw on Medicaid. That's a higher reliance than in 15 states - many of which voted for Clinton, including Virginia (21 percent), Colorado (18 percent) and Nevada (16 percent).

Idaho's reliance on Medicaid would be even greater had it opted to extend coverage some 78,000 adults who earn too little to qualify for subsidized private health insurance.

Next comes the proposed 25 percent cut in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. That would hurt 185,000 Idahoans - or about 11 percent of the population. At that rate, Idaho's need for food stamps exceeds that of blue state bastions such as New Jersey (10 percent), Colorado (9 percent) and New Hampshire (7 percent).

Just because the federal dollars dry up does not mean the need goes away. What charities won't pick up will be covered by taxpayers through Idaho's medically indigent and catastrophic health care programs as well as people fortunate enough to have private health insurance through cost-shifting.

All of this comes on top of other Trump policies that threaten to undermine the state's economy. The White House budget would cut \$213 million - about 1,000 jobs - from the Idaho National Laboratory near Idaho Falls. Trump's antipathy toward the North American Free Trade Agreement and his threats to deport undocumented workers could unravel much of the so-called "Magic Valley Miracle" And the GOP's American Health Care Act threatens states such as Idaho where there are more older, sicker and poorer people relying upon Obamacare.

So ask not why Trump is doing this to the very people who elected him.

Ask when those people are going to get wise to themselves. - M.T.