



CELEBRATE AMERICA

**HAPPY 4TH OF JULY
FROM BRENT AND JULIE HILL**

Thank you for your dedicated service to the citizens of Idaho. It is truly an honor for me to serve with you.

LEGISLATIVE IDIOMS AND OTHER VULGARITIES

During my six sessions in the Idaho State Senate, I have listened to a few clichés used over and over again. Each phrase has taken on a distinct meaning in the Idaho Legislature. I thought it would be interesting to research the origin of some of these idioms and share them with you. I hope you enjoy this little history lesson in legislative nomenclature.



CAMEL’S NOSE UNDER THE TENT



“This piece of legislation is just the camel’s nose under the tent.” Also known as heading down the slippery slope. This is an argument often used by legislators asserting that something they do not like is only the first step of many steps that they will like even less. This sort of “reasoning” is usually fallacious. There is no reason to believe that one event must inevitably follow from another.

The term itself comes from an Arab legend about a man and his camel who were crossing the desert. Night came and the temperature became colder. The man put up his

tent, tied the camel to it and went to sleep. As the night air grew colder, the camel gently thrust his nose under the flap of the tent. “Master,” he said, let me put my nose in your tent. It’s cold and stormy out here.” The man agreed that the camel could insert his nose, but no more since the tent was small.

A little later the man awoke to find that the camel had not only put his nose in the tent, but also his head and neck. The camel added, “I will take but little more room if I place my forelegs within the tent. I will be unable to make the journey tomorrow with frozen legs.” Reluctantly the man agreed, moving a little to make room.

Finally, the camel said, “May I not stand wholly inside? I keep the tent open by standing as I do.” So the man agreed and the camel crowded in. The man with difficulty in the crowded quarters again went to sleep. When he woke up the next morning, he found himself outside in the cold and the camel had the tent to himself. (SOURCE: CAMELSTORIES.COM)

GOVERNMENT RED TAPE

“It’s time to cut through all the government red tape and get this done.”



Beginning in the 17th century, legal and official government documents were bound with red tape. The first reference I could find to this practice was a Maryland law in 1696: “The Map upon the Backside thereof sealed with his Excellency’s Seal at Arms on a Red Cross with Red Tape.”

“I wasn’t going to weigh in on this issue, but . . .
A phrase derived from the sport of boxing. About a week or so before a match, the two contenders are officially weighed in to make sure each is still within his weight range. So if someone “weighs in” on an issue, he is officially presenting himself to be noticed or verified.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

This phrase as a variation of "God is in the details." The phrase is thought to be a variant of an Italian proverb, in which an acolyte monk, Martin, was told to write the latin phrase, *Porta patens esto. Nulli claudatur honesto*. "Be the door (always) open. Be not closed to any honest (person)", referring to the door of the monastery. Evidently, he misplaced the period and wrote, *Porta patens esto nulli. Claudatur honesto*. "Be the door open to no one. Be it closed to honest (people)." As a result, he lost his right of taking vows as a monk. Thus God (or access to Him) is dependent upon what is found in the details. The tale was to emphasize how little details make a big difference in meaning or results.

"Governing is in the details" and "The truth, if it exists, is in the details" are recent variants. (SOURCE: RANDOM HOUSE DICTIONARY OF POPULAR PROVERBS AND SAYINGS)

BANG FOR THE BUCK

During the years I served on the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee, I often heard lawmakers evaluate various appropriation bills based on which would give us the biggest bang for the buck. Although related to the military, we actually find the origin of the phrase in government appropriations. It originated during the Cold War when the budget-writing committee of Congress was deliberating funding for new weapons. The US Air Force habitually claimed that ballistic missiles such as ICBM's could do more damage to an enemy country for a given expenditure than a Navy aircraft carrier could. Thus, they claimed that missiles gave more "bang for the buck" than ships.

SINE DIE



The term *Sine Die* comes from Medieval Latin and literally means, "without day." Of course, it refers to adjournment without specifying a particular time or day for reconvening. It is also become a much appreciated and anticipated term looked forward to by weary legislators as a signal to the citizenry that its money has now been spent.

THAT'S A NO-BRAINER

"For many of us, overriding the Governor's veto of HB 121 was a No-brainer."

You may have guessed that this term has an American origin and first began being used in the 1950s. The first example I found was in the following Berry's cartoon by Carl Grubert that appeared in the *Long Beach Independent*, December 1959:



THE WRITING ON THE WALL

"After the governor vetoed a few bills, the legislature could see the writing on the wall."

According to the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament, King Belshazzar of Babylon was celebrating a drunken feast, drinking from sacred golden and silver vessels which had been stolen from the temple in Jerusalem. The fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote on the wall. Daniel interpreted the writing as a warning to the king of his arrogant blasphemy and told the king that his days were numbered. That same night, Belshazzar was killed leading to the defeat of the Babylonian Empire by Persia.

Shoot for the Moon: Archaic meaning: *To set oneself a very ambitious target without much chance of success.* Contemporary legislative meaning: *"Let's shoot over to Moon's for a burger and shake."*



THINGS WILL GET WORSE BEFORE THEY GET BETTER

A term coined by the Idaho Legislature to describe the next 2-3 years.

