

## Why Walking...and Why Now?

Gordon W. Petrie, Emmett Mayor

Late last year a national organization asked me to join its board. America Walks, the organization asking, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization leading the way in making America a great place to walk. Indeed, America Walks provides a voice for walking and walkable communities providing strategy support, training and technical assistance to state, regional, and local organizations.

Yet, the make-up is comprised of many academic types (perhaps mostly). One has to wonder why they would ask me, an unabashed conservative, to be a member of their organization.

The answer is simple: how to combat our ever-increasing body mass is one of the few areas not yet sinking to crass partisanship notwithstanding the kerfuffle generated over the recent one hour grilling of President Trump's physician. Is he really only 239 pounds? Is he really 6'3"? (Those stats give the president a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 29.9, overweight for sure. However, it is just one-tenth of a point—say a ham sandwich—shy of a 30.0 BMI, the obese category.)

Nevertheless, there is no dispute that overweight people have more health issues than those not overweight. The rise in obesity rates should be as alarming to the Surgeon General today as smoking was in the 1960's. What follows is a list of some the worse chronic conditions flowing from obesity: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, cancers (endometrial, breast, and colon), liver and gallbladder disease, and, but for space, I could list many more. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) inform us that heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes are the most prevalent, costly and *avoidable* of all health problems.

Besides a healthy diet, physical activity is the key to lowering weight. Cutting 500 to 1000 calories per day through diet and exercise should result in a healthy weight loss of 1 to 2 pounds per week. What is the easiest, most equitable and most practiced way to exercise? Walking. That is why this administration is doing all it can to encourage property owners to maintain their sidewalks. Not only is it required by law, it happens to be one of the most moral things we can do for each other as 65% of adults in Idaho struggle with overweight or obesity issues. I'm one of them.