

Idaho teetotaler delivers one pledge too many

Marty Trillhaase The Lewiston Tribune | [0 comments](#)

You'd think Idaho politicians would be gagging on pledges already.

There's a pledge to loyally support the Republican Party platform.

A pledge never to raise taxes.

A pledge never to cross the gun lobby on one side or the anti-abortion rights league on another.

But as pledges go, Scott Andrus of Twin Falls has matched the gold standard for being ludicrous. As the Idaho Statesman's Dan Popkey reported, Andrus, who pleaded guilty in a drunken driving-related case, put out the call for temperance: "I humbly ask that you pledge that no beverage alcohol will pass your lips during the 2012 legislative session. Please remain sober as you conduct the affairs of state."

What's next? No more dirty jokes? Decaffeinated coffee, anyone? And don't forget your hand sanitizer.

For teetotaling lawmakers - including those who belong to the Mormon church - signing on is about as easy as brushing your teeth or changing your socks. Since you've got to do it anyway, why not get credit?

Not so much for non-Mormon lawmakers who just happen to represent Mormon-dominated districts in eastern Idaho, however. Andrus just drove a wedge between those politicians and their constituents.

To top it off, Andrus has it entirely backwards.

Idaho's problem isn't too many lawmakers drinking too much.

Idaho's problem is too few lawmakers drinking too little - at least with each other.

Time was when Republicans and Democrats would end a day of backbiting and debating with a round or two. Maybe they came to work the next day a little worse for the wear. But in the process, they got to know each other. They formed friendships that transcended partisan or parochial divisions. They learned how to cut deals.

Take your pick: Whether it's sobriety or ideological purity, today's Idaho politicians aren't talking to each other like they used to.

Here's how ridiculous things have become: Andrus got 17 Idaho lawmakers to respond to this farce. A few gave him the rebuke he deserved.

"This question of yours begs the question ... do you think that legislators are just a bunch of heavy drinkers who abuse alcohol?" asked Sen. Steve Bair, R-Blackfoot, who doesn't drink.

But others couldn't resist the urge to grandstand.

"You ask a very interesting question and one that is easy for me to respond to," wrote Assistant Senate Majority Leader Chuck Winder, R-Boise. "While this may not be acceptable to many of my colleagues, I can assure you that I support your position and am willing to assure you that I do not drink during the session and I have always believed that I should not drink at any event or activity related to my service to the people of Idaho."

Well, if Winder and others are willing to sign this bogus pledge, may we humbly suggest some others?

- Pledge to pay your taxes. Rep. Phil Hart, R-Athol, you go first.
- Pledge to stop gouging the taxpayer for extra living expense money you don't need. You know who you are - Sens. John McGee, R-Caldwell, and Curt McKenzie, R-Nampa.
- Refrain from taking out-of-state junkets paid for by special interests, Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter, or by the taxpayer, Treasurer Ron Crane.
- Avoid obsequious showboating, Sen. Winder.
- If it's a matter of obeying the law, then pledge not to drive drunk. If it's a matter of public safety, then pledge to ban texting while driving.
- If all Andrus seeks is keeping legislators focused on their jobs, why not have them remain in Boise five days a week - or even weekends - until they finish?

Or you could get down to the only pledge that should matter to these people: their oath of office to support the federal and state constitutions and laws of the land.

Isn't that good enough anymore? - M.T.