

# Voters spoke

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

JEERS ... to Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn. On the issue of charter schools, Dorn's criticism is absolutely right - and irrelevant.

These schools bleed money away from an already underfunded network of traditional schools without delivering any measurable benefit. But Washington voters settled the issue Nov. 6. By approving Initiative 1240, they cleared the path to open 40 charters during the next five years.

I-1240 passed by a margin of 41,682.

Now Dorn is contemplating court action to block I-1240. By establishing a nine-member charter school commission, Dorn says the measure violates a constitutional provision vesting with his office "supervision over all matters pertaining to public schools ..."

All right. Then why not go to the Legislature and have the initiative brought into compliance with the state constitution?

Dorn's technical argument is disingenuous - and it serves to obstruct the voice of the people.

CHEERS ... to Idaho state Sen. Dan Johnson, R-Lewiston. For the past year, he has retained his elected seat on the Port of Lewiston commission while serving in the Legislature.

By a twist of state law, he's allowed to hold both - much like a handful of city leaders, including Lewiston City Councilor Thyra Stevenson, who is about to take the oath as a state representative.

But Johnson has declared his intention to step down from the port. Good for him. Commissioners Jerry Klemm and Mary Hasenoehrl will name his replacement.

Johnson simultaneously holding two elective positions should not be confused with his day job as Lewiston's solid waste manager. Idaho has a citizen, part-time Legislature. Johnson's entitled to hang on to his Lewiston job, provided he can come to terms with his employers.

JEERS ... to Sen. Sheryl Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood. Ten days ago, she endorsed Tea Party Nation Corporation founder Judson Phillips' plan to steal the presidential election from Barack Obama, even though he won the popular vote by nearly 4 million and carried 332 Electoral College votes.

Phillips was under the misimpression that if enough red states supporting Republican Mitt Romney boycotted the transmission process, it would deprive the Electoral College of a quorum and throw the decision into the GOP-controlled House of Representatives.

Turns out Phillips was wrong. There is no requirement for a Electoral College quorum.

Wednesday, Nuxoll walked away from her statement. But not because she was wrong about the Constitution. Not because she had demonstrated an appalling degree of contempt for popular elections and majority rule.

No, she was merely tired of the national ridicule she had attracted.

"Some have rejected the idea, so let's drop it and continue on. To vilify me because you don't like the idea is unnecessary," she wrote.

CHEERS ... to Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire. Before she leaves office, Gregoire is pushing Congress to pass the Marketplace Fairness Act.

That measure would bring Internet and catalog sales under sales tax laws in 45 states, including Washington and Idaho.

Off-site sales are growing four to five times faster than retail purchases. So this issue can't linger indefinitely.

How can states continue to pay for schools and services when the fastest-growing segment of the economy escapes sales taxes? In Washington, \$1.1 billion in taxes go unpaid. In Idaho, the figure is estimated to be at least \$30 million.

Meanwhile, it puts brick-and-mortar businesses that collect sales taxes at a competitive disadvantage.

Gregoire is no stranger to the issue. Five years ago, she steered Washington into the Streamlined Sales Tax Project, a coalition of states lobbying Congress for a remedy.

Idaho lawmakers won't even take that step.

Meanwhile, Gregoire has been pushing the issue with Washington's congressional delegation and her fellow governors, including Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam.

CHEERS ... to Idaho state Sen. Chuck Winder, R-Boise. He's dropped his challenge to Senate Majority Leader Bart Davis, R-Idaho Falls.

Davis will have to fend off Sen. Dean Mortimer, R-Idaho Falls. But whoever wins, it won't be Winder - who now serves as assistant majority leader. Elevating him would be an insult to Idaho's women and another black eye for the state. He's the epitome of the Republican Party's war on women.

Earlier this year, Winder pushed a bill requiring women to undergo an ultrasound before obtaining an abortion. No exceptions. Not for emergencies. Not for rape or incest. Not for fetal anomalies.

Plus Winder's bill would have forced many women to undergo an invasive transvaginal ultrasound.

And when he was called on it, Winder said: "I would hope that when a woman goes into a physician with a rape issue, that physician will indeed ask her about perhaps her marriage. Was this pregnancy caused by normal relations in a marriage or was it truly caused by rape?"

So give Winder credit for dropping out of the leadership race. That's one national embarrassment Idaho just sidestepped.

CHEERS ... to the city of Pocatello, where city leaders are pursuing an ordinance extending anti-discrimination protections on the job and in housing to gays, bisexuals and transgender people.

Pocatello would be the third Idaho city to take that step. Sandpoint was first. Boise will adopt its ordinance next week. Moscow's human rights community may forward an anti-discrimination ordinance to the city council by the end of the year. Idaho cities are stepping in because Idaho's sclerotic Legislature refuses to even consider extending the state's Human Rights Act. - M.T.