

# Cheers & Jeers: Distorting diva

By Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to Idaho state Sen. Sheryl L. Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood. In the her brief legislative career, Nuxoll has shown contempt for:

- The U.S. Constitution - Nuxoll wanted to steal the 2012 election from President Obama and hand the White House over to Republican Mitt Romney.
- The Idaho taxpayer - Until she was forced to return it, Nuxoll last spring misappropriated nearly \$2,000 in public funds for a blatantly political brochure.
- Facts - Last year, Nuxoll warned Obamacare would undermine Catholic church institutions - a stance Idaho Catholic schools, the Catholic Diocese of Boise and Catholic Charities of Idaho all repudiated.
- History - In 2011, she claimed Obamacare would "take our children away, which is the same way the Nazis did."

Now, the diva of distortion has reached into the crypt and plucked from it the most egregious analogy of all: the Holocaust.

Her target: Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter's efforts to have Idaho, rather than the feds, operate a health insurance exchange under Obamacare. That, Nuxoll said, would be the ruin of Idaho's health insurance carriers.

"Much like the Jews boarding the trains to concentration camps, private insurers are used by the feds to put the system in place because the federal government has no way to set up the exchange," she wrote in an email sent to 120 people and then posted on Twitter.

The day after the Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell broke that story, Nuxoll took umbrage:

"My question to her and all of you is: Would it be any different had I changed the subject matter from Jews to Catholics? Or any other group of people that were victim to annihilation? Well, I leave it to you. What do you think?"

OK, senator. You are comparing political adversaries in a fair, free and democratic dispute to the most ruthless, bloodiest, barbaric and evil dictatorship of the 20th century.

Turn your analogy around and it trivializes the extermination of 6 million Jews in the Nazi death camps. You have equated mass murder with an insurance business model.

Best case: Senator, you know not what you do.

Worst case: You know exactly what you're doing.

JEERS ... to Senate President Brent Hill, R-Rexburg. Here's Hill's reaction to Nuxoll's desecration of the Holocaust victims: "This is a very emotional issue for a lot of people. There's a lot of 'stuff' going around, a lot of information, a lot of viewpoints being expressed," Hill said. "As we get closer to making that decision, the rhetoric's going to get more dramatic. ... I don't think this is exclusive to Sen. Nuxoll."

What's the point of being the moral conscience of the Senate if you stand silent in the face of outrage?

The Aryan Nations saga left Idaho with an unfortunate narrative as a haven for neo-Nazis. But who just advanced that narrative more?

A junior senator from Cottonwood who scratched her itch for stupendously rancid hyperbole? Or the president of the Senate who stood by and allowed her do it?

JEERS ... to state Rep. Thyra Stevenson, R-Lewiston. Once again, Stevenson phoned in - literally - her role as a Lewiston city councilor Monday. That's the best she can do while serving as a freshman House member in Boise.

After her election in November, Stevenson the Indispensable said she'd wait until January to decide whether she'd step down from the city.

Then January arrived and Two-Title Thyra questioned whether her departure would deprive the city of a female councilor.

Now it's February. And when Councilor Jim Kleeburg pressed for an update, Stevenson stonewalled: "Councilor, I don't believe that's a discussion for this evening," she said.

Hmmm.

Stonewall Stevenson. Has a certain ring to it, don't you think?

CHEERS ... to Avista. In an op-ed published Sunday on this page, regional business manager Mike Tatko said the utility would not support repealing Idaho's personal property tax if it means undermining the counties, cities and schools that depend upon that tax.

If the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry succeeds in repealing the \$141 million tax, Avista stands to gain about \$6 million.

"Avista does not support the elimination of property taxes at the detriment of communities in Idaho," Tatko wrote.

The company becomes the second major Idaho corporation to take that view. Monsanto was the first.

JEERS ... to the legislators running Idaho's natural resource committees, Monty Pearce, R-New Plymouth, in the Senate and Lawrence Denney, R-Midvale, in the House.

It's one thing to parade Utah lawmaker Ken Ivory's harebrained scheme for Idaho to demand Uncle Sam turn over more than 30 million acres to the state.

But why do Pearce and Denney ignore the collaboration among industry, conservationists and federal land managers - such as the Clearwater Basin Collaborative, the Owyhee Initiative working group and the roadless forest rule panel - that is producing the very results they want: jobs, timber harvests, habitat restoration and a settlement of the roadless forests debate?

JEERS ... to state Rep. Pete Nielson, R-Mountain Home. Because eight of Idaho's 44 counties supported the Luna laws' assault on teacher contract rights, Nielsen apparently believes it's OK to dismiss 57 percent of voters who repealed that provision.

Nielson's logic puts Idaho's choice for president, Mitt Romney, in office. Blaine County's choice for governor, Democrat Keith Allred, would dethrone Otter.

And Nielson could go home. Democrat Pam Chiarella, who carried 33.5 percent of the vote against him last fall, would replace him. - M.T.