

Barbieri explains his brilliant rhetoric to the masses

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

For the sake of argument, let's just concede what Rep. Vito Barbieri already knows: The Dalton Gardens Republican is the smartest man in the room.

Certainly that was the case Monday when Barbieri's utter legal brilliance eluded the limited cognition of mere mortal men and women attending the House State Affairs Committee.

Up for debate was a bill that aims to end the ability of rural Idaho women to access by telemedicine early and safe abortions through the use of abortion-inducing prescriptions.

As Dr. Julie Madsen, a physician who has provided telemedicine services testified against the measure, the political sage of our age piped up:

"You mentioned the risk of colonoscopy. Can that be done by drugs?"

Responded Madsen: "It cannot be done by drugs. It can, however, be done remotely when you swallow a pill and this pill has a little camera, and it makes its way through your intestines and those images are uploaded to a doctor who's often thousands of miles away, who then interprets that."

Barbieri: "Can this same procedure then be done in a pregnancy? Swallowing a camera and helping the doctor determine what the situation is?"

Madsen: "It cannot be done in a pregnancy, simply because when you swallow a pill, it would not end up in the vagina."

Barbieri: "Fascinating. That certainly makes sense, doctor."

The silly people in the room hooted at Barbieri.

The backward people on the Internet laughed at Barbieri.

The liberal blogosphere and cable television outlets scoffed at Barbieri.

But they do not know the savant of Boise and how erudite he truly is.

Hours later, he brought it down to their level:

"I was being rhetorical, because I was trying to make the point that equalizing a colonoscopy to this particular procedure was apples and oranges," he told the Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell.

See, that's how rhetorical questions work.

You say something seemingly obtuse.

Then you circle back to explain it was rhetorical.

Here, we'll demonstrate:

Rep. Barbieri, how did you avoid learning where babies came from?

It's a rhetorical question.

Rep. Barbieri, would you say you are more of a misogynist - or just a self-serving politician?

Do you have an issue with female doctors - or just doctors in general?

Don't get mad. Rhetorical - remember?

Vito, what does it feel like to swallow both feet whole and have all 10 of your toes dangling near the back of your throat?

See how that works? Rhetorical.

Does this mean the Open Arms Crisis Pregnancy Center in Coeur d'Alene - on whose board you serve - is no longer coming to you for guidance on female anatomy?

Rhetorical question, you know.

You plan to speak again when this anti-abortion rights bill hits the House floor. Really? Why are you so generous to Rachel Maddow and the Huffington Post?

Tell us, oh wondrous lawmaker extraordinaire: Why do you think women need free prostate exams?

Here's one last example of the Barbieri rhetorical question:

Vito, if you swallow a camera, how far must it pass through your digestive tract before we find your nose? - M.T.