

Autocratic

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

JEERS ... to state Rep. Mary Dye, R-Pomeroy. Put yourself in the place of the five Pullman-area teenagers - four young women and one young man - who visited her Olympia office Monday as members of the Palouse Teen Council of Planned Parenthood.

Imagine trying not to feel intimidated by the trappings of the center of state government.

Imagine representing an organization that conservative eastern Washington lawmakers do not sympathize with - and one whose Pullman center was targeted by an arsonist.

Imagine lobbying Dye to consider supporting a measure that would allow women to purchase a year's worth of contraception at a time - rather than make monthly visits to the pharmacy.

And imagine the embodiment of authority stopping you in mid-sentence with:

"OK, so we know you're not a virgin," Dye said. "Now how about the rest of you?"

According to the Seattle Times, Rachel Todd, an education specialist with Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho, told the students: "You don't have to answer that. You don't have to answer that."

But dashing past presumption, skipping arrogance and careening right into passing judgment, Dye continued her lecture. Premarital sex, she claimed, leads to "losing your soul."

Singling out the lone male in the group, Dye said boys have advantages in finding sex before marriage but they risk their souls as well.

What would you do in their place? You'd probably leave Dye's office in a state of shock. You might even expect an apology.

Once the story broke, the Pomeroy Republican issued a statement that was more spin-doctoring than mea culpa:

"In hindsight, a few of the thoughts I shared, while well-intentioned, may have come across as more motherly than what they would expect from their state representative," Dye said. "If anything I said offended them or made them feel uncomfortable, I apologize."

Dye has yet to apologize directly to the young people for this transgression. She knows where to find them.

Stop whatever you're doing, Rep. Dye.

Pick up a dictionary.

Find the definition of two simple words:

Public.

Servant.

CHEERS ... to Senate Majority Leader Mark Schoesler, R-Ritzville, and state Rep. Joe Schmick, R-Colfax.

When the five Palouse Teen Council of Planned Parenthood students met separately with them Monday, they got what you would expect from any elected representative.

Respect.

Courtesy

Professionalism.

Schoesler and Schmick listened to the students' presentation about the contraception bill.

The students were under no illusions their point of view would prevail. Schoesler, for instance, told them he respectfully disagreed. But, as Todd told the Times, meeting with Schoesler was "an incredibly different experience."

Schoesler said he handled it as just "a normal meeting." Precisely.

JEERS ... to Idaho Department of Environmental Quality Director John Tippetts. Under a rule his agency has issued, the health of Idaho's Indian tribal members could be sacrificed in the name of corporate profits.

People are more likely to get sick eating contaminated fish from polluted rivers and streams than they are from the drinking the water. So under the Clean Water Act, states are obliged to determine how much fish their populations eat - and then restrict water pollution to maintain public health.

Surveys show 95 percent of Idaho's population consumes 66.5 grams of fish per day or less. That works out to the equivalent of a can of tuna every other day.

But Nez Perce tribal members consume three times that much fish.

Protecting the tribal population would force the DEQ to impose much stricter limits on the amount of toxic compounds industry can release into Idaho waterways.

Instead, DEQ sided with industry by proposing a rule that will protect 95 percent of Idahoans who eat fish but far fewer tribal members. Observers said it may be the first time DEQ has treated one culture so differently.

That's not likely to sit well with the Environmental Protection Agency, which has the final say and may impose its own tougher water quality standard on the state.

None of which mattered Wednesday when the state Senate Resources and Environment Committee voted 8 to 1 in favor of the rule.

CHEERS ... to former Lewiston City Manager Jan Vassar. Give north central Idaho's representative on the state Transportation Board credit for stopping plans to allow oversized truck traffic on State Highway 13's Harpster Grade.

Vassar had gotten an earful from residents and truckers in her region, who argued Harpster Grade was dangerous enough without putting 129,000-pound trucks on it. Tuesday, she urged a Transportation Board subcommittee to drop the idea.

She had the facts. She had the credibility. This was Vassar's backyard. You'd think the board would defer to her judgment.

Yet only fellow Transportation Board member Jim Kempton of Albion supported Vassar.

Kempton's help was enough. The subcommittee deadlocked, effectively curtailing the idea, at least for now.

CHEERS ... to Washington state Rep. David Sawyer, D-Tacoma. He's behind the latest effort to empower the voters - not their elected representatives - to decide the fate of recreational and medicinal marijuana shops.

It's called a pre-emption vote. In other words, to pre-empt state law - in this case, Washington's Initiative 502, which legalized pot sales in 2012 - the matter first would be put before the voters. That's how the state liquor laws allow Washington communities to become "dry."

"I don't know where people can get off representing a county or a city, especially a city, where almost every precinct voted for legalized marijuana," Sawyer told Crosscut.com.

Imagine how much saner life in Clarkston would have been these past two years had that policy been on the books. In spite of the fact that the community supported I-502 by nearly 55 percent, a majority of city councilors thought they knew best - and imposed a ban on retail stores.

Overturning that policy had to wait until last fall's city election when voters ousted the incumbents and elected a new

majority. - M.T.

