

# Will someone hand the senator a paper bag?

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

OK, Sen. Sheryl Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood.

Take a breath.

Take another.

And one more.

Get out a large, brown paper grocery bag. Inhale and exhale into it.

Keep at it until the excessive carbon dioxide molecules escape your bloodstream and the panic convulsions cease.

Feeling better?

Good.

Now let's talk.

Let's talk about the grand American experiment in self-government.

It works like this: Every four years, the people of this country holler, debate, insult each other and then file into the polling booths to elect a president.

Usually the candidate with the most votes wins.

If not, the candidate who carried the most electoral votes prevails.

Let's face it: This year, you're - well - pissed about the outcome. President Barack Obama got almost 4 million more votes than Mitt Romney. He carried 332 electoral votes - 62 more than needed.

No landslide, but decisive just the same.

Your party is depressed. So the Rush Limbaughs, the Sean Hannitys, the Ann Coulters and the Glenn Becks are blaming everyone and anyone.

What they are not doing is following your course.

Which is to endorse Tea Party Nation Corporation founder Judson Phillips' call for a coup d'etat.

On your Facebook page, Sen. Nuxoll, you've published Phillips' scheme to thwart the national will by encouraging the Electoral College members representing Romney's red states to sit out the Dec. 17 formal election.

Do that, Phillips says, and it will deprive the college of a two-thirds quorum, and throw the election into the Republican-dominated House of Representatives - which presumably would hand the office over to Romney.

"Using our last chance to defeat Barack Obama is important," Phillips says on your Facebook page. "Far too often the Republican Party seems more interested in losing gracefully than winning and governing."

Phillips is no constitutional scholar. David Adler, director of the Andrus Center for Public Policy at Boise State University, is. And Adler says Phillips is misreading the 12th Amendment. The Electoral College is under no obligation to round up two-thirds of its members to function. If a candidate gets 270 votes, he becomes president - and if the other 268 fail to show up, that's their problem. (In fact, some electors failed to arrive in time to cast a ballot for George Washington in 1789. You know how that turned out.) It's their problem because they just violated a 125-year-old federal law requiring them to transmit their votes.

The 12th Amendment's reference to a quorum applies only to the House if it becomes necessary for that chamber to pick a president.

Never mind, Senator, that Phillips - and you - are wrong about the substance of the Constitution.

You've trampled on its spirit.

You've invited an end to legitimate elections in this country.

You'd replace civil - and uncivil - discourse with chaos.

You'd encourage retaliation.

You'd create a Banana republic.

Have you not read your own oath of office?

As one of 35 Idaho senators, you've pledged to "support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of Idaho... "

How can you swear fealty to the Constitution while simultaneously showing it such contempt?

You recognize how polarized this country has become. This kind of talk from a supposedly responsible member of the government is dangerous.

You understand that, don't you?

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If not, get some help.

Please. - M.T.

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