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Face It: Arizona Republicans Are Too Dumb to Govern

By Mike Tully

Trash-talking is part of politics. How often do we find ourselves exasperated at political wrong-headedness and blast the speaker as “stupid” or “a moron?” The answer for most of us? More than we care to admit.

Political trash-talk is a release, reminiscent of Mark Twain’s comment about profanity: “Under certain circumstances, urgent circumstances, desperate circumstances, profanity provides a relief denied even to prayer.” While I sometimes refer to a commentator or politician with whom I strongly disagree as “stupid,” I don’t really believe they are stupid.

Or, at least I didn’t. But now that inmates occupy the Republican asylum, especially here in the Grand Canyon State, I can’t ignore the obvious: Arizona Republicans, by and large, are really, really dumb – far too dumb to govern. Some examples:

I met Mark Finchem the day he formally announced his first candidacy for the Arizona House of Representatives. I was a guest co-host on the late Emil Franzl’s radio show, “Inside Track.” Emil and I had been good friends for more than four decades and I previously co-hosted the program for two years. I was always deferential to newly minted candidates. It’s hard to run for office and I wanted to give all of them a fair shot, regardless of party.

The day before the show, I visited Finchem’s campaign website to see what issues he emphasized. The website said his primary goal was to eliminate unnecessary regulations, so I lobbed him a couple of softball questions. I asked to name two regulations he wanted to get rid of. A look of panic overcame him and he had no answer. When I asked him to name just one, he was a deer in the headlights.

Finchem looked like a regular guy, dressed casually in cargo shorts and a polo shirt. After he was elected, he changed his image, dressing like an extra in a low-budget western. He began to spout conspiracy theories, traveled to Washington for the January 6th insurrection and believes in the Big Lie that Joe Biden’s election was fraudulent. Most recently, he announced his candidacy for Secretary of State. His slogan is “prove it,” referring to the validity of the 2020 election.

Finchem said in a recent tweet, “We’ve already shown evidence of fraud - now it’s time for them to prove it wasn’t. So I want them to #ProveIt - prove that there was no fraud in the election. Prove that the machines can’t access the internet. Prove that the ballots are all there.”

Notwithstanding that there is no “evidence of fraud,” Finchem wants people to prove a negative. Logically, the absence of evidence that something exists is sufficient proof that it doesn’t. But Finchem thinks that it’s necessary to provide evidence that something does not exist. It’s like

declaring that there is life on Mars, then demanding that scientists prove there isn't any. The absence of any evidence of life on Mars is not sufficient for somebody with Finchem's world view. A man with such a tenuous grasp of logic is too dumb to govern as secretary of state, or anything else. I'm still waiting for proof that Finchem is not a moron.

Another example: Arizona State Senator Wendy Rogers. She is apoplectic that the Cleveland Indians and Washington Redskins are abandoning symbols that most Native Americans find demeaning. It's dehumanizing to be reduced to a mascot. Rogers, whose district includes many Native Americans, prefers to dehumanize them. She actually said this in a recent tweet: "I like Indians and I like Redskins. I like Aunt Jemima and I like Uncle Ben. I like Robert E. Lee and I like Stonewall Jackson. I don't like traitors who hate America. Stand up for our culture!"

If Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, who led a rebellion against America, are not traitors, then they are, logically, patriots. Since they fought on behalf of the Confederacy then Rogers, by praising them as patriots, declares her allegiance to the Confederacy. Rogers doesn't realize what her words actually mean. She's too dumb to govern.

Finally, there is Senate President Karen Fann. She was a nondescript politician who waded in far beyond her depth when she took it upon herself to overturn the presidential election results in Arizona -- or, at least, to cast doubt on its validity. Fann doesn't realize that spreading phony lies about the electoral process threatens democracy itself. She commissioned a phony "audit" of ballots cast in Maricopa County -- but only for the presidential and senate races, which were won by Democrats. In Fann's world view, a ballot cast on her behalf -- or for other republicans -- is valid, even if the same ballot shows votes for Joe Biden and Mark Kelly, which conspirators claim are invalid. How can a ballot that is invalid also be valid? Fann has no answer. Fann hired a Trumpian conman who runs a firm called "CyberNinjas" to conduct the phony "audit." The result? Arizona has become a national laughing stock. Fann should not remain in office. She is too dumb to govern.

I could cite other examples -- looking at you, Kelli Ward -- but you get the point. Suffice it to say Finchem, Rogers, and Fann are not unicorns. They are what the Republican party has become.

Arizona democrats can take advantage of this rampant idiocy with a simple slogan that should decorate every billboard, bumper-sticker, and TV ad:

"Vote for Democrats. We're not the dumb ones."