**John Eynon, Republican candidate, superintendent of public instruction, March 26, 2014**

A note to my fellow Idaho patriots regarding the conclusion of the Idaho state 2014 legislative session as pertaining to K-12 education policy. My thoughts are summarized in the following four-point outline, which includes specific legislation passed during this session. There were other bills passed, but in general they dealt with minutiae and administrative changes to already existing legislation, or were passed to extend the sunset clause on bills about to expire.

**1.** **What letter grade would you assign to the 2014 session?**

“C“

Basically we had a hold-harmless session. Certainly nothing was addressed regarding the concerns of most Idaho parents and teachers as pertains to the direction Idaho schools are being led.

**2. What do you think the Legislature did right this session, regarding K-12?**

**RS22523C1** provides for grant money to enhance secondary school programs in agriculture and natural resources. This legislation is a step in the right direction. I wholeheartedly support the enhancement and expansion of vocational, trade, agricultural, and business technical courses in our secondary schools. It makes significant sense to recognize these programs as preparing our children for the jobs awaiting them in Idaho.

**SB1229** provides counseling services for those students choosing to enroll in “dual enrollment” courses for college credit. This consideration should have been part and parcel to the legislation which provided for dual enrollment courses in the first place. It is a nice afterthought piece of legislation.

**HB385** provides for school districts to share the cost concerning required building modifications to meet state fire marshal requirements addressing school safety issues. School districts will be required to cover the actual cost of meeting the building modifications. Certainly this bill makes common sense.

**SB1257** requires the re-painting of school buses from the standard “yellow bus” paint to another color when a bus has been sold to private interests. No more old yellow buses with the school district logos painted over. Seems like a reasonable requirement.

Finally, I am hard pressed to find any other legislation that has passed concerning K-12 education policy which addresses the concerns of the overwhelming majority of voters.

**3. What do you think the Legislature did wrong this session, regarding K-12?**

The session failed to bring to a vote any bills addressing parental rights in the educational process, withdrawing Idaho from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, putting Idaho Core Standards on hold until a true vetting process had taken place. Twenty-six states across the nation have addressed over 200 bills concerning participation in Common Core, national standards, national testing, and issues concerning student privacy in relationship to statewide longitudinal tracking systems. Indiana and Montana have just passed legislation to withdraw from CCSS. Five other states refused to participate. Idaho legislators would not even bring one bill to the floor for consideration? I am disappointed that Sen. Steven Thayn withdrew his bill to withdraw from the SBAC.

The Idaho Governor’s Task Force on Education has disregarded the voices of Idaho voters concerning Propositions 1, 2 and 3, “Students Come First.” Regardless of your position on these issues, the people did make their voices heard, and the task force proceeded to incorporate all of the elements of Propositions 1, 2 and 3 in their recommendations. Not one of our representatives addressed this fact in this legislative session!

**HB543** declares an **“emergency”** exists to ensure appropriations to provide for committees to address the recommendations made by the Governor’s Task Force on Education: “career ladder, average daily attendance considerations, cooperative service agencies, tiered licensure, accountability, autonomy, mastery learning (Common Core Standards). In other words, we have some “unfunded” issues to deal with in the immediate future, such as how to pay for “broadband” services.

**RS22893** provides for the funding of “leadership premiums” for districts to proceed with teacher bonuses. This is certainly a convenient way of rewording “teacher merit pay” which was voted down by the citizens of Idaho. I am not averse to creating teacher incentives which reward outstanding service! I am disappointed by the fact that fair teacher compensation has been neglected for a decade and not addressed by this legislative session.

**4. Based on what you saw this session, what do you consider to be the top priority facing Idaho's next superintendent of public instruction, in the 2015 session? How would you approach that priority?**

Based upon what I have observed in this legislative session my top priorities as state superintendent of public instruction will be:

* Hopefully work with Gov. Russ Fulcher to reconvene the Governor’s Task Force on Education to address those issues of greatest concern to parents, teachers, and school board trustees … appoint committee members with the view that the best government is the one that governs least, and restore local control of our schools.
* Put Idaho Core Standards on hold until a committee of Idaho teachers, administrators, and parents can be established to consider the latest national peer review regarding Common Core and national testing, delegate proven professionals in the field of child psychology to determine the “developmental appropriateness” of CCSS and SBAC. Demand from the testing consortium empirical data proving the effectiveness of SBAC to actually improve student achievement results and narrow the gap between minority groups and Caucasian students.
* Appoint a committee to readdress the five-star school rating system to ensure the fine arts, music, performing arts, and visual arts are supported in order for a school to attain a five-star rating.
* Continue to pursue every means to enhance and expand vocational, trade, business technical courses for our secondary schools.
* Work closely with our colleges and universities to take over the responsibility of improving teacher effectiveness, and continuing education courses, rather than pursuing a further reliance upon private corporations to provide for school improvement.

Surely, Idaho can do better in the future to address issues which will restore states rights, and local control of our schools!