

**Statement on Idaho's school levies, from Jon Hanian,
spokesman for Gov. Butch Otter, Sept. 16, 2014:**

Following the 2012 referenda that removed "Students Come First" the governor decided the stakes were too high and the need for reform too great not to try something different. After paying attention to the voters and the will of the people, he called upon the State Board of education to facilitate a discussion to bring the best and brightest in education to identify and then advance the best practices around Idaho, America and the world. As a result of his leadership a broad cross section comprised of various education associations, representing teachers, administrators, and school boards were asked to bring members of their choosing to lead the collaborative process. The charge was to create a vision for Idaho schools that would not be bound by politics, cost estimates, or the old way of doing business. In essence, the governor said to this group, "You tell us where the path to excellence lies and I will help build the road to get us there."

The Governor's Task Force embraced the State Board of Education goal that 60 percent of Idahoans ages 25-34 have some form of postsecondary credential by the year 2020. This ambitious goal, established under Gov. Otter's leadership in his first term, seeks to stimulate greatness in high school students, drive economic prosperity, address remediation in our colleges and universities, and foster a seamless and high-level system of post-secondary education now known as K-Career.

The task force did the work, which achieved broad-based, bipartisan consensus. It produced 20 recommendations that included a road map to achieving our goals as well as identifying the obstacles standing in our way.

The work produced by the Governor's Task Force addressed in detailed and methodical fashion, a sustainable and apolitical five-

year plan to funding inequities that include among other things:

- Enhanced teacher compensation.
- Restoration of operational funding.
- Career ladder compensation to elevate starting teachers' salaries from \$31,000 to \$40,000 within the next five years.
- Ongoing professional growth and learning tied to a modern licensure system for teachers.
- Investment in classroom technology.
- Dedicated broadband.
- Literacy proficiency in third grade.
- Feasibility of a mastery-based system that allows students to achieve at their speed.
- Incentivize teachers to maintain or improve to levels of excellence by adding more mentoring time.
- More collaboration and in-service.

This vision captured a critical mass of thought, led by educators, and soon spread as the basic framework of every conversation about education in Idaho.

For the last eight months the State Board of Education has been given the charge of adding to the framework that the task force has already developed. During the 2014 legislative session Gov. Otter delivered \$35 million for operational funds, as a significant down payment to meet the needs of districts, more money for technology, increased emphasis on advanced opportunities, and two days' worth of collaboration for classroom teachers.

Now, the transformation of this vision is more solid than ever with the committees on autonomy and accountability, literacy, and career ladder and tiered licensure recommendation in the pipeline. What will this mean? It will mean that Gov. Otter stands ready to see through this vision, to do his part just as Idaho's educators and business leaders have done theirs by shepherding these ideas from

their infancy to implementable strategies.

The task force established a fiscal stability group that studied those issues related to fairness and the bond levy question. What they recommended includes not only increased focus on certainty in the state budget from year to year, which is a noble goal, but also efforts like the career ladder and the restoration of operating funds. The career ladder will allow rural districts more opportunity to keep their good teachers and we are moving into the full implementation of that plan. The governor recommended and saw through \$35 million in operating funds, representing a third of the amount necessary to return to pre-recession levels. These things are related and they are all aspects of the recommendations the task force made.

So simply put, the governor's plan is Idaho's plan, it's our plan. It is the credible result of all the hard work that went into a plan that was designed by educators, for educators to remove the politics and angst from the conversation and get to the heart of what is right for Idaho students, teachers, and our communities large and small.