

## United Vision for Idaho response to Governor's State of the State and Budget Address

For Immediate Release  
January 11, 2010

United Vision for Idaho on behalf of our coalition members and affiliates respond to the Governor's State of the State Address.

United Vision for Idaho convened a joint session with the National Association of Social Workers, Idaho Women's Network, the Interfaith Alliance, Idaho Equality, Idaho Catholic Charities, Idaho Hunger Task Force, the Snake River Alliance, AFL-CIO and the Idaho Human Rights Education Center to evaluate the Governor's State of the State and Budget Address. In response to the address and the agenda put forth for the 2010 legislative session, we found the content of the speech to be largely out of touch with the realities facing Idahoans.

As Governor Otter proudly paid homage to Reaganomics and the failed policies of the past that place priority on corporations and big business, leaving hard-working Americans and their real struggles out of the equation, the forecast is for government as usual that has led us to the social, economic, and environmental crises we face today.

The measures put forth call for tax credits for businesses and corporations, maintaining cash reserves, drastic cuts to public education, and fail to address the need that exists across our state. Eliminating personal property tax and recommending significant tax credits for infrastructure construction investments illustrates the Governor's intent to award advantage to the "haves" at the expense of the "have nots."

We object to the Governor's plan to spend a million dollars to fight health care reform while taking more than a million dollars from Idaho's public schools. The Governor would have the people of Idaho believe that this is the only approach to balancing our budget as he asks Idahoans to make additional sacrifices in the coming year. We challenge the Governor to consider that a myriad of approaches to fiscal and social responsibility exist, including Oregon's measures 66 and 67, removing some sales tax exemptions, adopting a progressive tax on those individuals who have made their wealth off public infrastructure, closing loopholes and tax credits for the wealthiest among us, and utilizing federal stimulus funds that have eluded our state.

We stand firm that environment does not need to take a backseat to business and the two can work hand in hand without compromising communities and making them vulnerable to its unwanted effects.

This plan awards access and privilege to the wealthiest among us in the far-fetched hope that this benefit will one day reach Idaho towns. We agree with the Governor that this is the time for shared responsibility, courage of conviction, and strength of character. We believe that this is a time that will indeed define our American character and our Idaho spirit. In this time of economic crisis, we know that far more unites us than divides us.

Now is not the time for partisan politics and tired approaches, but courageous leadership and innovative solutions. We are, as the governor assured us, all in this together and as such we cannot forget our fellow Idahoans: of whom 43 percent are children living in poverty, 85 percent are uninsured members of a working family, 15,000 of them children. We are the 40,000 who lost their jobs last year, the 13

percent living below the federal poverty-level, the 47.7 percent of grandparents who are the primary caregivers for our children, the one of every 30 children in Nampa who are homeless, or the 85-90 percent of Idaho high school graduates who do not go on to higher education. As a state we rank sixth in the nation's foreclosure filings, and as the ninth poorest people in the nation. We agree that building our economy is a priority; the people of Idaho depend on it, but we believe that we can do that better and not at the expense of our future.

We advocate not higher taxes but equitable and fair taxation. We advocate for a government that provides all people access to the tools and resources to enhance their own lives and that of their communities. We advocate not big government, but a compassionate government that has the courage to stand with and on behalf of its people.

This legislative session promises healthy debate and while we might not always agree, we call on the Governor and our legislative representatives to open their doors and their minds to our organizations, to listen to different approaches, and to work with us for the common good.