

## Op-Ed Submittal

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While we are still months away from the full onslaught of the political campaign season, it is interesting to note the tenor of many candidates of every political persuasion who are developing a new “spin” designed to elicit good feelings of motherhood and apple pie, and one of which voters should be wary.

I say this because the spin is regarding “small business.” These candidates call for small business help from the government, even though when asked, most small business owners prefer that government just get out of the way. In reality, the real cynical political motivation for touting “small business” is to create an “us versus them” mentality that is not only a misrepresentation of reality, but a dangerous path of rhetoric that leads to an economic caste system.

It is true that the Idaho Association of Commerce & Industry has members which are some of the largest companies in the world. But we also have a significant contingent of member businesses that fit into the category of 10 employees or less, as well as numerous member associations with smaller employers as their members. IACI, like all Idahoans, has a stake in ensuring that the political environment remains healthy for all sizes of companies, which is why this rhetoric is so concerning.

Based on Idaho Department of Labor statistics, most of Idaho enterprise is very small (10 employees or less), representing 81% of the total businesses in the Idaho. But in reality, just 18% of the total employees in Idaho work in this demographic. Using the federal standard for small business (50 employees or less) the total number of enterprises as a percentage of employers jumps to 96%. Fifty percent of Idahoans are employed by companies of 50 employees or less.

So where do the other 50% of the Idaho citizen employees work? They work for the remaining 4% of employers (nearly 1,800) that have 50+ employees. It is our belief that these politicians wrapping themselves in the “small business” spin are ignoring the needs of fully half of their citizens while demonizing them at the same time.

Idaho businesses (small and large) want a stable employment base with productive employees. This is why IACI invested in the development of additional community colleges and expansion of education technology to bring more opportunities to Idaho’s students – its future workforce. Idaho business wants a reliable infrastructure for transportation, energy and water. Idaho business wants a stable and predictable tax code that lowers the cost of equipment and investment. Idaho business wants an efficient and effective regulatory structure to help them succeed, and not stand in the way of innovation and production.

These objectives are universal regardless of company size. Those who would seek to capitalize on populist outcries of an “us versus them” mentality only seek to divide Idahoans who should be united on improving employment opportunity. Small business owners, and in fact ALL business owners, should find this insulting. Idaho voters are smarter than that. What we need in Idaho are fewer politicians offering pithy statements about how they will support one business

group over another, and seek out real leaders who understand that, for Idaho to succeed, it requires ALL Idaho's employers to succeed.

We will continue to vigorously advocate pro-business public policy so that all business and industry may operate profitably, thereby creating prosperity for the people of Idaho, knowing that as business and industry prospers, so do the citizens of the State of Idaho. We take this mission seriously, and so should those who are seeking the endorsement of the voters on November 2nd.