



Idaho State Senate Idaho House of Representatives Democratic Leadership

Press Release

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Democrats Denounce Bullying Tactics and Same Bad Ideas in S1184

BOISE – Legislative Democrats have rejected the latest version of the Luna-Otter Plan—a repackaging of the same flawed proposals introduced in January, masquerading as “new and improved.” They also denounced the intimidation tactics being used by bill supporters who have threatened school board trustees opposing the legislation.

“The people of Idaho have spoken loudly and clearly on the worst elements of the Luna plan—they don’t want any part of cutting teachers and redirecting scarce dollars into computer purchases,” said House Minority Leader John Rusche. “The Superintendent and the bill sponsors claim they’ve changed the bills, but they simply applied lipstick to a pig. S1184 just passes the buck, with budget shortfalls now falling squarely on the shoulders of local districts. Districts will have little choice but to cut teachers in order to finance the Luna laptop program.”

Where districts had requested increased flexibility to deal with the funding crisis, the sponsors of S1184 have provided line-item mandates that equate to further reductions in local school budgets for several years. Where Idahoans from around the state voiced universal opposition to the original plan, particularly an over-reliance on technology, S1184 continues to fund technology over teachers. Where voters called for responsible leadership, the sponsors have passed the burden to districts already struggling to keep the lights on after two years of cuts. The consequences are inevitable: larger classes, fewer teachers, and legislators passing the buck.

Democrats also decried the alleged threats being made to the Idaho School Boards Association.

“The bill’s sponsors and supporters are using not just sleight of hand but also a coercive heavy hand to force this unpopular legislation through,” said House Minority Caucus Chairman Brian Cronin. “Recent reports suggest school board trustees are being held hostage, forced to support the same misguided legislation or face threats to further deprive their districts of funding. At the same time, supporters claim the bill has undergone significant revisions when the truth is its most objectionable provisions remain.”

“Several weeks ago, the Governor denounced activities he considered to be contrary to ‘the Idaho way,’” noted Senate Assistant Minority Leader Les Bock. “We have to ask—Does ‘the Idaho way’ include bullying school board members and others who disagree with the Governor, the Superintendent, and some legislators on matters of policy? Is telling people that they fail to understand a bill simply because they disagree with such policy the way we debate ideas in Idaho?”

S1184 passed the Senate Education Committee yesterday on a 6-3 vote. Education stakeholders who testified on the bill voiced ongoing concerns with the anticipated adverse impacts on school funding and classroom learning. The state’s two largest school districts, Boise and Meridian, have urged lawmakers to defeat the bill, noting

that Luna's plan introduces cuts that are dramatically deeper than school districts would otherwise have to sustain due to economy-related shortfalls.

For more information, contact:

Rep John Rusche, House Minority Leader, (208) 750-6048, jrusche@house.idaho.gov

Rep Brian Cronin, House Minority Caucus Chair, (208) 724-1959, bcronin@house.idaho.gov

Senator Les Bock, Senate Assistant Minority Leader, (208) 332-1409, lbock@senate.idaho.gov.

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