



OFFICE ADDRESS
STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 83720
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0081
(208) 332-1409
FAX: (208) 334-2116
emalepai@senate.idaho.gov

Idaho State Senate MINORITY LEADERSHIP OFFICES

For immediate release - Friday, March 25, 2011

Senate Democrats Denounce Passage of Final Bill in the Otter-Luna Miseducation Proposal

Boise – Yesterday, Governor Butch Otter, Superintendent Tom Luna and their cronies in the business sector took a major step forward in realizing their dream of privatizing public education in Idaho. Senate bill 1184 passed on a vote of 20 to 15 with eight Republicans joining all seven Democrats in voting no. No to larger class sizes that will impede student achievement. No to the elimination of thousands of teaching jobs when our economy is struggling to rebound. No to an unjustifiable shift to untested technology in a time of crisis management for our schools.

“We want to extend our gratitude to the eight Republicans – senior statesmen all - who voted no on this harmful, ill-conceived legislation,” said Senate Minority Caucus Chair Michelle Stennett. “To the proponents of this bill, we say shame. This legislation was railroaded through the Senate without public testimony and over the objections of parents, teachers, students, administrators and over 95% of our constituents.”

Sometime between the November elections and January 12th, Superintendent Luna apparently experienced a conversion regarding public school funding. Through a still-mysterious process, he dreamed up his “Students Come First” scheme. As all Idahoans know, teachers have been putting students first since the dawn of public instruction and Mr. Luna wants to show his gratitude by replacing them with a computer. When this proposal lacked the support it needed for passage and districts pleaded for more flexibility, Superintendent Luna’s “three pillars” turned into a game of Three-Card Monte. The Otter-Luna bill is a shell game that will force districts to fire teachers or fund education at the local level through levies, thereby confronting the budgetary cliff that so intimidated this legislature.

All four education stakeholder groups granted an opportunity to testify strongly opposed this bill despite threats of repercussions. During Senate deliberations, Democrats asked that the bill be read at length but this request was scuttled. Full bill readings are not something to be taken lightly or done frivolously. Prior to Mr. Luna’s education gambit, the last time Senate Democrats asked for a bill to be read at length was the tax shift bill that defunded public schools during the special session convened in 2006.

“The 2006 legislation led to a major shift in school funding that is the cause of much of the budget crisis we now face,” said Senator Les Bock, Assistant Minority Leader. “Had that bill been defeated, \$132 million in the current year alone would be available for the education of our children. I am very concerned that this misguided dismantling of education will lead to decreased student achievement and even fewer Idaho students going on to college.”

“Many proponents of the Otter-Luna scheme have suggested that we can fix the problems down the road,” said Senator Stennett. “Our children cannot repeat 2nd grade because we got it wrong! When did our children become guinea pigs upon which the business community can test new revenue streams? How can we ‘fix’ a botched educational experience for even one child?”

###

For more information, contact:

Senator Les Bock, 208-332-1409, lbock@senate.idaho.gov

Senator Michelle Stennett, 208-332-1353, mstennett@senate.idaho.gov