

An open letter to the employees of Kootenai County

April 23, 2012

I will start this letter with a confession of sorts. As I have been actively campaigning, I did not conduct a thorough examination of the pay scale and classification issue that is causing a great deal of alarm about what your pay is, or may become after the dust settles. When I was made aware of the issues by a concerned county employee, I was a bit shocked.

While I am a strong fiscal conservative, there is a difference between holding wages as they are, as opposed to capping the possibility of a future raise or advancement, or even hitting employees with arbitrary pay cuts. As a county, we need to value employees, and treat them with respect. The idea that the BOCC is looking at building a parking garage for the county administration leads a reasonable person to wonder where the priorities are. Where are the savings from these changes going?

How can we expect county employees to not look elsewhere for opportunities when we haphazardly start looking at cutting their ability to provide for their family? When budgets need to be trimmed, there is a proper way to do it, and there is the meat cleaver approach. While the BOCC owes it to the citizens of the county to make sure we are not overpaying the county employees, they also have a responsibility to ensure that any reclassification of duties be done in a manner that is fair and is based on solid data, compiled by people who understand the proper way to do it.

I will be the first to admit that while I am not such a person, I will commit to you that I will see to it that reclassifications done by people who are not experts in this field will not stand if I am elected, and many of you know that I am not the type of man to allow what has been done to stay done just because leaving it alone is the easiest way to deal with it. While the word "easy" is in my vocabulary, I would point out that it is a four letter word last time I checked, and I try to avoid those.

Another policy from the past that I intend to revive is a kitchen cabinet of employees and department heads. I don't think the proper role of a county commissioner is to micromanage, but rather set policy. I intend to listen to the employees, not only through their department heads, but also directly. While I am mindful of the need to retain a chain of command, there are times that a person in that chain of command is the problem. I promise that I will be your best advocate in this type of case. Most of you know I am not the type of person to accept an answer without questioning it, and I feel that this sets me apart from the other candidates for this position.

I have been asked several times lately if this is a two way race or a three way race. With all due respect to Mr. Holmes, it is a two way race with three candidates on the ballot. While Mr. Holmes has raised enough money for signs and flyers, he admitted at the Tea Party Forum that he had raised only \$550 from other people. At that time I had raised

over \$20k. I point this out because running a county wide race to win requires a significant financial outlay and a fair amount of support from precinct committeemen.

A closed Republican primary election is what it is, and a candidacy run without a solid Republican platform doesn't stand a chance at doing anything other than helping the incumbent retain his seat. I entered the race after deciding at the end of December that no candidate capable of winning the seat from the incumbent was able to be identified. Mr. Holmes' entry did not change that, because his message of raising taxes does not resonate with the Republican voters who will vote in this election, and he lacks name recognition outside Rathdrum.

I ask for your vote, and I promise in return that I will keep an open door policy, and ensure that those who dedicate their careers to providing the services of Kootenai County will be valued, and will always be treated with fairness and respect.

Thank you,
Larry Spencer