

July 15, 2013

First I want to thank the teachers for the tremendous work that you do and for your loyalty to the children and to the Coeur d'Alene community. You are a gift to our community and we wouldn't have the high quality education in the Coeur d'Alene School District that we have without the daily hard work and dedication of the teachers and staff. I have never met a teacher, who went into the teaching business for the money,....but of course it is also their job and they expect to be paid fairly and treated with respect.

What happens in the classroom between the teachers and their students is what education is all about. Parents, administrators, support staff and the Board are all here to enhance the educational experience of students and none of it can be done without high quality dedicated teachers. Everything we do needs to be focused on having the best trained and dedicated teachers we can have in the classroom and giving them the tools and support necessary to have an exciting and dynamic educational experience for our children.

I'd like to see us start off negotiations with this *mostly new board* with an attitude of collaboration and cooperation, and not an adversarial relationship which has been a problem between teachers and the board at times in the past. This school board will be completely open about the financial situation of the school district. I have the utmost respect for teachers and I think I speak for some of the board when I say that I will listen to what the teachers have to say and I hope you will understand the board's position on finances also.

I don't like the financial position the Coeur d'Alene School District is in due to inadequate funding levels from the legislature and I am on record as saying that I didn't like the funding of the levy last March either. We are coming out of a very tough recession and government at all levels has been cut,..... but we do have to ask when will the state begin to fund education at a higher level and restore funding levels to what they were in the past?

However now the Coeur d'Alene School District and the School Board has to deal with the cards we have been dealt.... while we hope that the district's financial position will improve over the next few months and years.

I have never understood the attitude some people have toward teachers and their union. We trust you teachers with our children and grandchildren every day. We see teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut throwing their bodies on top of children and sacrificing their lives to save the lives of children and I have little doubt that many of the teachers here would do the same thing. However some people in the community don't think that these same teachers should be able organize and to speak up for optimal working conditions and reasonable wages for the incredibly important work they do. I don't agree, and I respect our teachers and your right to organize and I will listen to you as I expect you will listen to the board and administrators.

I am not naive. I have run businesses before and I have had to balance the budget and I know that there may be some tough negotiating ahead. Because of the type of work I have done for 35 years I am not

afraid of conflict if need be, but I don't look forward to it and I don't think there needs to be such conflict with the teachers and the union.

We want your help going over the financial situation of the district and coming to a reasonable settlement that benefits all parties.

It is also important to keep in mind that with the limited dollars we have available we have to not only treat teachers and staff fairly but we also have to fund all the other operations in the school district from buying and fueling busses and buying books and supplies to paying utility bills and having an adequate level of administrators and support staff to insure the best educational experience we can afford to provide for our students.

One other thing I want to say before we get started is that people have told me that the wages and benefits of teachers in Coeur d'Alene are too high and they need to be comparable to businesses in the private sector.. I don't think the teachers in Idaho and Coeur d'Alene are extravagantly paid and although because of money problems there will need to be some significant adjustments to the districts benefit package,.... I don't think the benefits are extravagant.

It seems to me there needs to be an improvement of wages and benefits of many employers in Idaho and one way to do this is to fund our school systems from elementary school to college at a level that would attract industries that pay well. These industries are typically interested in high quality education for their workers and their families.

President Franklin Roosevelt said: *"The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize."*

Business leader Lee Iacocca said *“In a completely rational society the best of us would aspire to be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor and the highest responsibility that anyone could have.”*

I agree with these sentiments and I think some of the board does too. Let's work together with good will to be fair to the teachers and staff as well as the citizens of this community who elected this school board and who pay the bills for the schools.

We should all be working toward the goal of doing the best we can for our children. Thank you.