

IDP Chair: GOP and Lobbyists Are Too Cozy

Chairman Larry Kenck/Idaho Democratic Party

We the People of Idaho do not control what happens in our Statehouse. Lobbyists and special interests are calling the shots there. The outcome: more cash for the wealthy and higher taxes for the rest of us.

If Idaho's rank as 50th in family wages is not enough proof of that, then look at the cozy relationship between high-powered lobbyists and GOP politicians.

On January 10th, GOP politicians skipped work to attend a free campaign school organized by Idaho's most powerful lobbyists—for more than two hours during a time of day that our legislators to be working for all of us.

Over 50 GOP politicians attended the "Republican Incumbents Campaign School."

School attendee, Sen. Dean Mortimer, said this: "Skip and the others are saying, 'Anything we can do to help get you re-elected, we're here.'"

Idahoans should note—the lobbyists said they'll do "anything" to keep GOP politicians in power. ("Skip" is former Sen. Skip Smyser, longtime lobbying powerhouse who is partnered with a former chief of staff for ... Governor Otter.)

Why does this matter? What does this lobbyist-GOP politician partnership mean?

It is the reason that Idaho families are suffering through an economic catastrophe. After 20 years of handouts to the wealthy and well-connected, our families are paying for it.

GOP leaders show no inclination to stop the catastrophic slide.

Look at Governor Otter. Despite deep cuts to schools and students, Otter is seeking a pittance to fund his own schools task force recommendation while giving the rich and well-connected another \$30 million tax cut.

Make no mistake. GOP politicians know that families are struggling to make ends meet. (Although the lobbyists around the Capitol look like they've weathered the storm just fine). They just ignore it.

A few days before the legislative session started, House Speaker Scott Bedke of Oakley, mused with reporters about Idaho's 50th rank in family wages:

"It doesn't feel to me like, as an Idaho citizen, that that is the case," said Bedke. He shook his head, perplexed. **"It doesn't feel like that to me here. ... It doesn't feel like we are in the 50th position here."**

Just this week, Speaker Bedke proposed taking away your grocery tax credit—that's \$80 million of your money—to give to the rich and well-connected. He says it is to attract business—even though that exact strategy has failed and failed and failed Idahoan's again and again and again.

Will Speaker Bedke and Gov. Otter get their tax hikes on regular Idaho families approved? Well, they have super-control over the Legislature and all of the statewide elected offices. And they have very important friends who have promised to do "anything" to get their partners in the Statehouse re-elected.