

I'm here, but where's Butch Otter?

A.J. Balukoff /Lewiston Tribune

Hi, Marty Trillhaase. I understand that you have been looking for me.

My apologies for being a little hard to track down. It's true, I've been all over the place, talking with a lot of our fellow Idahoans.

These past few weeks I have been visiting Idahoans in Bonner, Kootenai, Bonneville, Bannock, Canyon, and Bingham counties.

Since my launch and throughout my visits, I have been engaging with Idahoans about their concerns with education and our economy. I have been talking with community and business leaders about what Idaho must do to turn things around. All are concerned with Idaho's crash to 50th place in education and wages, but there are great ideas and people in Idaho that are going to help turn that around!

Yet a better question is, where is Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter?

In his State of the State address, he declared that his first priority was education. He talked proudly about his bipartisan education task force and its 20 recommendations to improve the deplorable state of education in Idaho.

Yet, we have heard nothing from the Statehouse about these. Why isn't Gov. Otter championing those recommendations? He said education would be a priority. It doesn't look like it is.

Perhaps that is because he's busy looking for the \$27 million that was lost in the treasurer's office recently or working with the legislature to help cover the \$14 million needed for the Idaho Education Network because of his administration's questionable contracting practices.

He could be preoccupied with the investigation of the Corrections Corporation of America's falsification of staff records, an investigation he first blew off. Whatever keeps him busy, he's absent on the issues that matter most to us.

So where am I?

Working diligently on a campaign to change this type of leadership. Perhaps you don't see the "bells and whistles" campaign that we've come to expect from career politicians, but I am hard at work.

I am building a campaign that is focused on the values that have disappeared from our top elected leadership - hard work, honesty and putting people first.

A lack of these values has driven us to the bottom - in our economy, wages and education - but with the right leadership, we can turn Idaho around.

I've been part of businesses and organizations that have done this, but it does take leadership with the right vision and values. This will be the message that I will share with Idahoans for the next nine months. But it will be up to Idahoans to send that message to the Statehouse in November.