

Elections have consequences: One could be a real review of Common Core

Wayne Hoffman/Idaho Freedom Foundation

The defeat of Senate Education Chairman John Goedde, R-Coeur d'Alene, could produce a needed leverage point on the issue of Common Core which, until now, didn't exist.

I'm not saying that the Legislature quite has the nerve to stop Common Core. What I am saying is that there is at least a chance to attack the issue that didn't previously exist.

Up to now, Goedde and his House counterpart, Reed DeMordaunt, R-Eagle, Gov. Butch Otter, his November rival A.J. Balukoff and both party nominees for superintendent of public instruction have been supportive of Common Core. Very supportive.

While other states are rethinking the national march toward uniform mediocrity in education, our state officials have stayed loyal to this odious education fad. And as sweeping as these standards are, I again point out that there has yet to be a single debate on the floor of the House or the Senate regarding them.

However, elections have consequences. And here's the biggest: Come December, when new legislators are sworn in and legislative assignments are made, someone will have to step forward as the new Senate Education chairman.

The Senate allows committee assignments based on seniority, so it is plausible that Sen. Dean Mortimer, R-Idaho Falls, the panel's vice chairman, could step up into the role to replace the deposed Goedde.

Depending on how he plays it, Mortimer could leverage his opposition to Common Core to raise the issue's profile in a way Goedde was unwilling to do. Mortimer could also use his power to block legislation that might be necessary to its implementation or promote legislation that would put in sideboards. Either way, opportunities exist that did not previously.

It is possible that other leadership and committee openings might be more appealing to Mortimer, in which case, Sen. Steven Thayne, R-Emmett, a former teacher and an education policy wonk, also opposed to Common Core, could step up. That leads to similar possibilities as with Mortimer.

Another interesting turn, although more of a long shot at this point, is Sen. Bob Nonini, R-Coeur d'Alene, who previously served as chairman of the House's education committee. Nonini not only opposes Common Core, he's pretty used to and unafraid of the hot glow of the education spotlight.

There is another interesting dynamic important to note regarding Common Core, and this has to do with the House. Newly minted GOP legislative nominees (some of whom don't face opposition this November) have expressed opposition to Common Core, meaning it is quite possible the House will have new legislators who are more opposed to the new education

standards than previous incumbents. That issue could also come into play in that chamber's leadership races—the decision on who will serve as speaker, majority leader and caucus chair—this winter.

The speaker and his lieutenants decide who the committee chairs are. I don't know whether Speaker Scott Bedke, R-Oakley, is in any danger; but he has presided over a deeply divided House, and I suspect that for Bedke, the conservative victories over moderates Ed Morse, George Eskridge and Doug Hancey will be more problematic for the speaker than the devastating (and dishonest because of the tactics employed) defeat of conservative Lenore Barrett.

Finally, I suspect that by the time the Legislature arrives in town, the real extent of how bad Common Core is will become more clear. The federal government, for example, is threatening Indiana over its decision to walk away from the standards. Parents are frustrated with Common Core lesson plans. Teachers are upset with tests they're supposed to administer without seeing. Students are overwhelmed by the length of the exam.

A growing group of parents, teachers and students are motivated to stop Common Core. And now, quite possibly, there be new faces in Boise in key positions willing to listen.