

# Otter says education not about spending cash

*Idaho governor also pleased with Yates as new state GOP head*

**Terri Harber, Moscow-Pullman Daily News**

Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter told an audience of business people in Treasure Valley earlier this week that when it comes to education, "it's not how much you spend, it's how you spend the money."

When asked during a 10-minute phone interview Wednesday with the Daily News to elaborate on his comments and how they relate to Idaho's education system, he said the state's reading and mathematics levels are good even though not as much money is spent per pupil than in such places as Vermont and the District of Columbia. The nation's capital and other large cities have additional concerns that increase expenses, such as security, that aren't costly for schools in smaller and even rural areas -

including metal detectors and substantial levels of targeted law enforcement.

When asked about what he and the Idaho Prosperity Fund, the state's largest political lobby, had in common politically, he said efforts to improve K-12 education were their mutual interest.

The reason is that this would "grow workforces that'll be needed" in the future, Otter said.

The Republican governor is seeking a third term in office and being challenged by Democrat A.J. Balukoff, a long-time Boise school board trustee.

Otter also address the election earlier this month of Steve Yates as the GOP's new state chairman. In June, this year's GOP state convention in Moscow ended after officials from the across the state failed to approve a new platform or even elect party heads.

Yates was chosen during a special meeting in August after a judge ruled former chairman Barry Peterson was no longer the head of the party and that his term ended when the Moscow convention came to a close.

"I have every reason to believe Steve is actually what we need - good leader, thoughtful, a problem-solver," Otter said. Especially "being the grassroots party that we are."

While many see the governor as a party leader, the party chairman oversees efforts more localized levels, such as precincts and neighborhoods, to attract and retain voters, among other tasks.

Yates, who used to work for Vice President Dick Cheney, should be able to bring the major factions of the Idaho's party together, Otter noted.

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