

IDP Chairman: Top business lobbyist ‘slugs’ Idaho teachers, children

By Larry Kenck

If folks in Idaho's halls of power act offended by a profane email written by the President of Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry (IACI), they're just faking. Politicos tend to cuss, a lot, when speaking to their peers.

But a leaked email from IACI President Alex LaBeau is shocking; not for language that is salty enough to kill a garden slug, but for the content—and the context.

The context?

Mr. LaBeau leads the most powerful business group in Idaho. During the 2014 election, Mr. LaBeau directed IACI's hundreds of thousands to attack Idaho Democratic governor candidate AJ Balukoff. LaBeau likely helped target millions that the Republican Governor's Association spent to attack Balukoff. The attack ads were either distortions or outright fabrications about an honorable public servant. Also, note that Mr. LaBeau's right-hand, IACI VP Jason Ronk, left IACI to be Otter's 2014 campaign manager. Now, Mr. Ronk is VP of IACI again.

It is clear Gov. Otter condones these guys—they're the good ol' boy network in action.

Mr. LaBeau and Idaho's good ol' boy network have a governor to champion tax gifts for wealthy contributors every year ... except last year when the governor sought re-election. As IACI's head, Mr. LaBeau ignores schools that lose revenue to these tax gifts. Under LaBeau, IACI shows little concern that 94 of 115 school districts need override levies to stay open. While IACI members need well-educated workers, under LaBeau, they don't worry that schools have four-day school weeks. Remember, no school ever cut a day of classes because it would be better for our kids. They did it because Mr. LaBeau, the GOP-dominated Legislature, and the governor slashed funding for schools.

The content?

Someone leaked a nasty email that Mr. LaBeau sent to his colleagues. It's really bad. In his email, Mr. LaBeau—whose salary is likely in the six digits—raged against a senator for proposing to raise teachers' salaries before giving LaBeau's members another tax gift. In his email, Mr. LaBeau kicked off a plan of retribution. His message to the Legislature: Never oppose a force that is powerful enough to re-elected a damaged governor who is weathering two federal corruption investigations.

Mr. LaBeau gave us a naked look at Idaho's mean-spirited good ol' boy system. Do you stand for Idaho kids? You may as well stand in front of a bullet train—with Mr. LaBeau and his cronies at the throttle.

Despite this embarrassing incident, IACI board members are sticking with Mr. LaBeau. So, here's a link to the IACI board members: <http://iaci.org/IACIHome/AboutUs>.

Contact them. Let them know you support their businesses and thank those who go above and beyond to support your community. But also ask why they think Mr. LaBeau represents their organization's values. Ask why it's okay to punish a lawmaker who proposes a way to help our kids succeed.

Let us know what they say.

It's pretty clear that when Mr. Labeau writes, "hug a teacher," he means, "slug a teacher." That's shocking and flat-out wrong.