

**Mary Souza's 5.17.15 news letter**

## **More than Meets the Eye**

Dear Newsletter Readers,

I'm sure you've heard the buzz about the Child Support bill that was not passed by the legislature and is the reason we are all going back to Boise again for a Special Session starting on Monday. I've been wondering when and how to tell you that what you've been hearing from the media is not the full story; there's much more to this topic than meets the eye.

I've been browsing through yet another round of news and online stories about the Child Support bill, formerly known as S1067 but now called H1, and came across a good example of the slanted agenda promoted by some media outlets. I thought this might be a good time to lay out my concerns.

You know the House Judiciary and Rules committee heard testimony on S1067 on the last day of the regular session, early last month, and they voted 9-8 to hold the bill and not pass it through. The press and blogs have gone wild since then, calling them all kinds of names, including "ignorant", "idiots" and much more. They have accused the legislators of hating children, being greedy Republicans and on and on. (An economics professor, school superintendent, lawyer, etc.; these are highly capable and careful people who voted to hold the bill.)

The legislators are not stupid at all, they were acting responsibly. They had serious questions about an important piece of legislation, and, in the final hours of the whole session, right before adjournment for the rest of the year, their questions could not be adequately answered by the Health & Welfare Dept. or others, so a majority of the committee voted to hold the bill.

Only now, after all these weeks of unrelenting ridicule, does a bit of

acknowledgement by the media appear. But it is still presented in a purposefully muted manner.

For example, Betsy Russell's Eye on Boise blog, for the Spokesman Review, carried some sensational headlines and descriptions when S1067 was first held back. All of these were designed to get readers to open and read the articles. Here are a few of them:

**4/13:** "Otter 'concerned', says State's 'child support system at serious risk.'"

**4/13:** "Brouhaha over killed child support bill divides House Republicans"  
--Betsy wrote a long description and included several highly controversial quotes.

**4/14:** "Four lawmakers aired Sharia law concerns before House committee killed child support bill"

--Her description teased the link to a CdA Press column with an excerpt saying the committee "caused reason to fly out the Capitol window."

This weekend, on Betsy Russell's Eye on Boise blog, she has a post titled "How we got here on child support legislation". In her short, plain, one paragraph description she says there's a new report by Melissa Davlin, who reviewed hundreds of emails exchanged by the House committee members regarding S1067. But Betsy doesn't reveal any of the findings. She doesn't "tease" in the headline or try to compel readers to go to the link she provides. No quotes. No controversy. It's all very dry. Unless you actually go to the report by Melissa Davlin, who by the way, seems to be the only real reporter willing to do any research these days, you'd know nothing of the interesting facts discovered through the emails.

I wonder why Betsy didn't herald that Melissa's report revealed, "Members of leadership said no one from the Department of Health and Welfare or the governor's office contacted them about the child support bill until around the time of the committee meeting."

(My Note: It is quite unusual that the administration didn't offer information, answer questions and didn't make sure leadership and the committee were comfortable with the bill ahead of time. Yet this same Health and Welfare Department penned a scathing rebuke of the House committee after the bill was held back. One long-time lobbyist told me he's never seen that happen

before.)

Or maybe the sensational media could have reported Melissa's research shows that only "Hours before the April 10 committee meeting, the state Office of Child Support Enforcement received informal word from the federal government that it had no issue with amendments to different sections of code, as long as UIFSA (treaty) language wasn't altered." (My Note: The committee had previously been told absolutely no wording changes or amendments would be allowed.)

Betsy had several posts on her blog, Friday, discussing travel expenses for the special session. Several lawmakers were highlighted and quoted, in my opinion grandstanding, to say they wouldn't ask the state to cover their travel expenses because the legislature "didn't finish the job". But Betsy didn't highlight that Melissa's research revealed, "House Speaker Scott Bedke also pointed out that while lawmakers have taken heat for the cost of the special session...it would have been more expensive for them to stay the extra week required to research more options and vet the amendments with stakeholders."

And, finally, there's a great deal of interesting information in Melissa Davlin's report. One key headline could have been that House leadership "Maintains the lawmakers who had concerns did the right thing".

Please take a few minutes to read Melissa's report at:  
[www.idahoreports.blog.idahoptv](http://www.idahoreports.blog.idahoptv)

You might also want to listen to the 4 min. radio clip of US Senator Crapo's thoughts on this bill, where he compliments the 9 who stood their ground when answers were not available. You can hear it by [clicking here](#).

US Senator Jim Risch told me recently that he won't give an opinion on the bill but he is glad the legislature is grappling with it because that's our job.

Now I will make my way to Boise and be ready for the special session on Monday. I am on the Senate Judiciary & Rules committee, so will be part of

the joint public hearing on the child support bill. Both House and Senate committees will hear public testimony together, then the House committee will deliberate and vote. If they pass the bill, it will go to the full House for a vote. If successful, the bill will come to our Senate committee for a vote and then, if it passes, the full Senate. Will this whole procedure take only one day as the Governor is predicting? We'll see what happens.

You can watch Monday's action live on your computer by going to [www.legislature.idaho.gov](http://www.legislature.idaho.gov), then go down the list to "audio and video streaming" and choose the Lincoln Auditorium as the location of the proceeding.

I have been reading and researching a great deal and will listen with an open mind to the testimony we hear Monday. This is a complex issue with serious potential ramifications for children and families. It also involves international law and a multifaceted international treaty, with language to be woven into our state law. None of this should be taken lightly.

Eye on Boise is widely read and valued by many government officials, but it's emblematic of most media today which highlights stories that fit their agenda and lowlights those which do not. Let's keep that in mind and remember to always look beyond the headlines.

Have a great Sunday! --Mary