

Our View: We don't need tax cuts in Idaho, we need investments

Devin Rokyta/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

Idaho needs better roads, more funding directed toward education and substantial investments in broadband and job training.

The list could go on and on.

But, if history is any indication, what it will get and what it needs are two vastly different things.

The state is staring at a potential \$139 million surplus in tax revenue if the current forecasts hold true. It's some \$92 million more than what lawmakers were expecting, which is a good thing for Idaho.

Unfortunately, it is likely a foregone conclusion the surplus will be squandered with more unneeded tax cuts for the wealthy. Republicans just can't resist a tax cut.

While Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter has said he has no plans to introduce a tax cut proposal, he did say he would be open to approving one if lawmakers brought him a bill. Of course he would.

The last time the state had such a surplus was in 2012, and the Legislature responded with \$56 million in tax cuts, cutting its top individual income tax rate from 7.8 to 7.4 percent and the corporate rate from 7.6 to 7.4 percent.

Sure, Idaho's economy has modestly grown since the cuts, but the nation's economy was already showing signs of life at that point and has only continued to strengthen. The Gem State's growth, while nice to see, has been nothing to brag about.

The tax cuts also did nothing to address the fact that Idaho pays the lowest wages in the nation and that it ranks near the bottom of the barrel in education and among the worst states in terms of broadband speeds and availability. Roads are also perennial concern.

We have to wonder where Idaho would be if it valued investing in its residents rather than providing massive tax cuts.

If our leaders really care about growing Idaho and making it attractive to outside investment and businesses, they won't waste this year's surplus on tax breaks, and instead they will invest in the state's future.