



Idaho State Senate
Idaho House of Representatives
Democratic Leadership

DEMOCRATIC RESPONSE TO THE 2010 STATE OF THE STATE SPEECH

JANUARY 12, 2010

(Representative John Rusche) Good morning and thank you for coming. We are here today to talk about Idaho's future.

First let us acknowledge all the efforts of the public servants who have been doing more with less to respond to Idaho's budget crisis. Last year, in a deepening financial crisis, the Governor and many legislators were focused on road while cutting public schools for the first time in Idaho history. This most recent proposal continues to slash critical services without any long-term strategy for job creation, and ensures that Idaho will, once again, lag behind other states in recovering from this recession.

(Senator Kate Kelly) During the last decade, Idaho's Republican leaders have made short-sighted decisions to hand out tax breaks to their special-interest supporters. They have hijacked the future of our children by shifting control away from the local school districts. They have squandered good economic times, only to be left with a fragile economy when times get tough. Idaho businesses are closing, we're bleeding jobs, people are losing their homes, and families are struggling to pay their bills.

As we enter this new decade, Idaho faces some exceedingly difficult choices resulting from years of poor decisions. Public health and public safety are at risk to Republican leaders propose to continue to slash critical services – and to dramatically cut public schools. In contrast, democrats see a path to opportunity, jobs, economic growth, and prosperity.

(Representative Rusche) The current budget crisis is a symptom, not a cause, of our problems. It is the result of a lack of vision and a seeming determination to drive an ideology rather than achieve results. In the last two years Idaho has lost nearly 70,000 jobs, and one in five Idahoans is unemployed or underemployed. Recovering these jobs – and saving the ones we have left - must be our top priority.

Here is what we should do. Establish a vision of jobs for all Idahoans. We must avoid decisions that put people out of work. We propose that every cut in a state agency include an estimate of its effect on private sector jobs. Every agency must have as a priority support for those private sector jobs.

In Idaho, more than 80 percent of all jobs are created by small business! We must enhance the opportunity and the capital for small business to grow and create the jobs that support our families and communities.

We agree with the Governor that we must give local people the tools they need to improve their communities and attract economic development; we support local option authority. Much of the time, our local leaders have a better handle on how to create jobs than we do in the Statehouse.

We cannot continue to slash higher education, the engine of ideas for innovation and new business development.

(Senator Kelly) In these critical times, we should be expanding and enhancing our public schools, not dismantling them. Make no mistake: your children and grandchildren will be hurt even more if this Governor and Idaho's Republican leadership continue their assault on neighborhood schools and higher education.

Our educational system plays a vital role in Idaho's economic development – in growing good jobs. Already our children's schools have cut extracurricular activities, they have increased student fees, cut electives, reduced textbook replacement, increased class size and even shortened the school week. There are record enrollments at our community colleges at the same time their resources are shrinking.

Less education funding will only hurt our already dismal graduation rates and our already low rankings when Idaho's public schools are compared with other states. This is not the way to attract businesses to our state. This is not the way to build our economy.

Our children are our future. We cannot continue to erode their educational opportunities. Idahoans deserve a government and leaders willing to invest in a sound future for our children and the generations to come.

(Representative Rusche) If we are to give Idaho a sound future and pull out of the current downward spiral, we need a plan that will strengthen our economy and attract good jobs. We need a vision of our children in 21st century classrooms where they can learn 21st century skills for a 21st century economy.

- A commitment to more efficient state government, using our resources in the best manner possible.
- A future that reflects the Idaho values of individual freedom and responsibility, hard work, community and family.
- And a vision of opportunity and prosperity.

We look forward to working with the Governor and our colleagues to achieve this future of opportunity, good jobs, economic growth, and prosperity.

(Senator Kelly) It is critical that our state consider the repercussions of cutting investments that have a positive long term return. It is short-sighted to cut schools, close parks, eliminate state troopers or curtail environmental protection if such actions jeopardize public health and safety and our potential for growth.

Attracting good jobs is about much, much more than tax breaks. It is about good schools, low cost energy, recreational and tourism opportunities, and easy access on line, on the road and in the air. We need to maintain and capitalize on Idaho's as one of the most desirable places to live and work.

The Democratic proposal focuses on work, on private sector jobs. When those jobs return, so will state revenues. When those jobs return we will reduce the need for safety net services. When those jobs return, Idaho will move forward, not backward.

Idaho Democrats see a future that is very different from that of the Republican leadership. We see a future of opportunity, good jobs, economic growth and prosperity. A future where our citizens will weather economic storms better than those in other states. A future where our children will get a world-class education that draws employers here. A future where our students can afford to go to college and stay in Idaho for rewarding careers.

We invite all Idahoans to join us in this vision.

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