



C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

August 20, 2010

Dear School Superintendents and Administrators,

As you are aware, Congress recently passed legislation appropriating \$10 billion for educators and school support personnel. This designates \$51.6 million for the State of Idaho under the federal distribution formula.

My initial reaction to the appropriation of these funds was less than positive. My experience in public service suggests that increased federal deficit spending and the strings attached to federal funds is a dangerous combination. While funds made available by Congress are partially offset, it is important to note that those offsets include the retraction of more than \$17 million promised to Idaho for road projects under previous legislation. A promise made today at the cost of a promise made yesterday is indicative of the nonsense and inequities that often accompany federal action.

In recent days I have worked with State Superintendent Tom Luna, legislative leadership, the Office of the State Board of Education, and the U.S. Department of Education to confirm that Idaho qualifies for Education Jobs funds. Funds would be made available through our existing State funding formula and an estimated distribution breakdown is available from the State Department of Education.

I must highlight that these funds are one-time in nature and strictly limited for the salary, retention, hiring or rehiring of teachers and other student support personnel. You will have 27 months to use these funds at the district level. I strongly urge districts accepting these funds to focus on the preservation of student-teacher contact time and that you consider budgeting funds not only for the 2010-2011 school year but also in the 2011-2012 school year. Since a decision already has been made by Congress to appropriate this taxpayer money, it is imperative to me – as I'm sure it is to you – that the funds be administered responsibly and properly.

We are faced with balancing local decision-making in the education of our children with the long-term burden of the federal debt and compliance with greater mandates, rules and regulations from Washington, DC. I do not take this balancing act lightly and I do not assume that our local education officials do either. While it is my determination that Idaho should apply for our designated share of funds, it is important that our local school boards and superintendents have a say as well.

I understand that your budgets for school year 2010-2011 have already been set. For this reason I ask that you confirm your acceptance of these funds. Federal guidance dictates that any funds not utilized by school districts must be returned to the federal government. Please let the State Department of Education know no later than Friday, September 3.

As Always – Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.L. Butch Otter", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor of Idaho

CLO/rb