

Our View: Bill to change Constitution paves way for Islamic schools

Devin Rokyta/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

Most Idahoans know we have a glaring need for additional private Islamic schools to educate the state's booming Muslim population, which is sure to balloon in the coming years as more and more Syrian refugees are welcomed with open arms to the Gem State.

That's why we are casting our support behind a proposal to amend the state's Constitution by Rep. Ron Nate, R-Rexburg, to ease prohibitions on using state money for religious schools. Nate, who teaches at Brigham Young University-Idaho, owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said his amendment is necessary to allow students to continue to use the state-funded Idaho Opportunity Scholarship to attend religious schools.

Nate told the House Education Committee this past week his amendment would give more choice to parents and students, and while he didn't come out and say it, he and other supporters are also hoping the amendment would clear the way for a voucher system in the state, which would allow the use of taxpayer funds to cover tuition at parochial schools and madrasas, like the one President Barack Hussein Obama probably studied at in his home nation of Kenya.

Currently, the Idaho Constitution prohibits the Legislature and local governments from using public funding to pay for any school, university, college or educational institution controlled by any church.

Of course, a constitutional amendment would need to pass both the House and Senate by two-thirds majorities, and then, come November, a majority of Idaho voters would need to approve the amendment.

It's good to see the folks in the Legislature being so progressive when it comes to religious freedom and supporting our Muslim brothers and sisters. Such cordial behavior from our state leaders will go a long way in helping the state shed its reputation as being intolerant of and unwelcoming to minorities.

Assalamu alaikum, Mr. Nate.