

**2018 DAY ON THE HILL REPORTING  
FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE**

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. As Karen just stated, I am Jim Stoor, current President of the Idaho School Boards Association. I am a 14 year member of the Soda Springs School District Board of Trustee's. Other than the 7 years I lived in Elko Nevada and serving a 2 year LDS mission I have lived in the state of Idaho. I am a product of Idaho's Public School System and I am a believer in its importance and success. My four kids are also products of the Public School System. They were all very successful and graduated all with High Honors. I work as a shift coordinator for the JR Simplot Company. I have served on my local Board for 14 years and the ISBA Executive Board for 6 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to let us speak before you today. I would like to take a minute and introduce the other officers that I serve with. They are Marg Chipman, Immediate Past President from Weiser, Jennifer Parkins, President Elect from Genesee, and Wally Hedrick from Meridian Technical Charter School in Meridian.

I would also like to recognize my local board members who are here with me, along with my Superintendent and Business Clerk.

In addition to the officers and my local board, you will see nearly 200 Elected school board members and appointed Charter Board Members along with their Administrators ,who are here for a couple of days; to talk with all of you about what is important in their districts and charters. As a reminder, ISBA allows charter schools to be full members of our association and have a voice and vote in our legislative platform as well as run for office. We represent all 115 school districts and 40 of the 50 charter schools. That means that we represent around 900 school board members.

I would like to focus my talk today on Funding and Accountability. I know those are both big words when it comes to education and it means lots of different things to lots of different people. I do want to thank you for the commitment that you have all made to public education. Even, during the great recession when cuts were occurring to all government funding, you did everything you could to fund education. Also during that time, you provided us with more flexibility which always makes our jobs easier.

Since that time, you adopted and supported funding of the Career Ladder which has provided us with unprecedented increases in funding for our teachers and our districts and charters. This has helped so much in hiring teachers for our respective Districts. And you also continued to make modest increases to our operational funding. Finally, you have also included additional funding for literacy, technology, dual credit programs. All of those dollars have helped keep our districts and charters moving toward increased student achievement.

We understand that with additional funding comes additional accountability. That means more reporting with teacher evaluations, yearly continuous improvement plan reporting, and a myriad of other reports that we provide to both the State Board and State Department of Education. We work hard to provide those reports in a timely manner.

Speaking of accountability, I would like to discuss one of the main philosophies that ISBA has always tried to champion – and that is local governance. One of the recommendations from the Governor’s Task Force on Public Education was flexibility. The intent was to remove line items and specific requirements for each district or charter. While we have made some strides in that area, we still have a long way to go.

We appreciate that there are certain interest groups and/or legislators who believe that one program or another is a means to increasing student achievement. What we believe is that there is no one program or one idea that is going to do that. We believe that each individual school district or charter school knows what is best for the students in their community. While we have made some strides in providing flexibility, we still have a long way to go. We would ask that we begin moving this flexibility at a much faster pace and allow districts and charters to make decisions at a local level that will work to increase student achievement in their community.

Even with the increases in funding, there are currently 93 of 115 school districts that still rely on supplemental levies. While the statute uses the term “supplemental” levy, the reality is that they are used to fund critical day-to-day operations of their districts. They are only one defeated levy vote away from deep cuts to the programs that the districts offer. Because 85-95% of school districts and charter school budgets goes to salaries and benefits, any cuts that are made, directly impact programs that impact students and their achievement. We expect this trend to continue with possibly even more districts needing a supplemental levy.

That is why it concerns us when we see several pieces of legislation being passed out of committees that would have significant fiscal impacts on a school district or charter school's ability to operate. There have been several pieces of tax legislation, one voucher bill, and several bills addressing at how and when we can run bonds and levies. Before voting on those bills, we would ask that you carefully consider the ramifications they will have on the students in your local community.

Study after study shows that Idahoans see education as the number one priority in Idaho. Those same studies show that Idahoans are also willing to be taxed in order to have good schools in their communities. That is why it is confusing to us that the legislature would do just the opposite and continue to cut taxes.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, what is more concerning to us are the remarks that have been made in committees last week by both presenters and legislators. I want to be clear that none of these remarks were made in your committee. However, these remarks have been made specifically about elected school board members who represent school districts and charter schools all across the State. Those remarks included statements that indicated that

we were “lazy”, “bullies”, “intentionally deceitful”, and “tried to pull the wool over taxpayer’s eyes”.

We are all elected officials just like all of you. We take an oath of office that we are statutorily bound to uphold. We are unpaid members of our community who get up every day to volunteer our time to do what we think is best for the students in our community. We are accountable to the patrons and taxpayers in our communities. We are accountable to the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, the Federal Government, and the Idaho Legislature. We understand our roles. We understand that we are accountable for the safety and education of the young people in our schools. None of us take that responsibility lightly.

We know that we may have philosophical differences on how to run our schools, what programs we should have, and how to administer them. We also realize that not everyone will agree on where and how the money is spent or even if a levy or bond is needed. You all face those same differences of opinion in this body.

While differences of opinion will always be part of the work of any elected official, we would ask for civil discourse in these matters. We would ask that when such remarks are made that

the Chair of the committee use the gavel that has been provided to him or her and demand that all of us be treated with respect. And, we would ask that none of you make those kinds of statements.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, I would like to take a minute and thank all of you for the work you do. Once again, as elected officials, we understand that the job you have is not an easy one. The Idaho School Boards Association, our staff, Executive Board members, and all our members are here to assist you in any way we can. Please don't ever hesitate to reach out.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Committee. I appreciate your time today and I would be glad to stand for any questions.