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# The Community Page

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## Who ya' gonna believe... the Governor, the Superintendent of Schools, AND the State Legislature... or the Union?

When it comes to evaluating propositions 1, 2 and 3, there is a lot of conflicting information out there. Who are we going to believe? Are we going to believe the Governor, the Superintendent of Schools and the State Legislature, or are we going to believe the Union? In order to answer that question we might ask ourselves: Who has our children's best interest at heart? Our elected officials? Or the Union?

### Just as we predicted.

Earlier this year the Community Page predicted that the Unions would wage war on Idaho's education reform. After what they did in Wisconsin, it was not difficult to predict that they would try to do the same in Idaho. The Unions have had a stranglehold on America's teachers and schools for decades. And under their influence, education in America has not done well. In the past, the United States led the world in education. According to the most recent data comparing 15-year-old students internationally, kids in the U.S. rank 14th in reading, 17th in science and 25th in math. The Unions say that is not their fault. The Unions' position is that the quality of teachers is pretty much the same everywhere and teachers should not be blamed if some kids just won't learn. We agree that we should not blame the teachers, but we can legitimately blame the Unions for forcing school districts to keep teachers who are not performing and for not allowing incentives for teachers who do a better job. Unions have controlled our school system for decades. But the American people have had enough of the Unions' propaganda. Education reform is happening all over the U.S. as voters move to put education back in the hands of parents and local school districts. Even the teachers have had enough of the Unions. They are exiting the Unions by the tens of thousands each year. The NEA (National Education Association, i.e. teachers' union) reports that Union membership is down by 150,000 over the last two years. The NEA forecasts they will lose another 200,000 members over the next two years. The Union fears that if the Students Come First legislation passes in Idaho the Union will become even more obsolete. That is hard to argue with, but really, shouldn't our schools be designed to support our children's education rather than the Unions' interests?



### Threats and vandalism did not work.

When Idaho's education reform called Students Come First was introduced in 2010, all three separate laws were challenged by the NEA. And in typical union style, it got ugly! Superintendent Tom Luna's car was vandalized with spray paint, his tires were slashed and his mother was harassed. Union bosses threatened boycotts of businesses who testified in support of education reform. And the political careers of our state legislators were threatened if they voted in favor of the legislation. Fortunately, no one blinked and the legislation passed. It was signed into law in the spring of 2011.

### Continued falsehoods.

The Students Come First laws, which were passed by the Idaho legislature and signed into law by the Governor, will appear as Propositions 1, 2 and 3 on this November's ballot. Now the Union is falsely stating that the new laws will increase classroom size, reduce teacher pay and cause an increase in property taxes. None of that is true! It's just simply Union propaganda designed to confuse voters. The theory is that if voters are confused on any law on the ballot they will traditionally vote no.

### Not that certain.

On last week's Community Page we stated that if Prop 2 is voted down teachers will not be paid the \$38 million that will be due in December. But it has become more complicated than we suggested in last Sunday's ad. Until last week it was well understood by most legal minds in Idaho that there would be no way for teachers to receive the \$38 million in bonuses if Prop 2 is voted down. But, given that there is \$38 million on the line, we should have expected some legal maneuvering. Everyone now admits it's a legal quandary. The problem is in the timing.

### The quandary.

Currently, there is a law on the books that says the teachers will be paid the bonuses before December 15. Teachers have been working to qualify for those bonuses. Without question, they deserve to get paid. **Superintendent Tom Luna has stated that he will do everything in his power to make sure the bonuses are paid.** But if the voters vote down Proposition 2 he may not have authority to make that happen.

### It's a matter of timing.

The election is **November 6**. If Proposition 2 is voted down it is not removed as a law until the vote is certified on **November 21**. That means the current law stays on the books until **November 21**. The current law states that the school districts will be sent the \$38 million on **November 15**, which is **after** the people have voted but **before** the law becomes certified. So it's pretty well accepted that school districts will receive the money. However, the law also states the school districts have until **December 15** to send out individual checks to the teachers. The legal question is whether the school districts will dare send out the checks if it's no longer allowed after **November 21**. According to legal experts we have talked to, this is a new area of law. No one knows which way it will go. Each school district will apparently have to decide on its own and risk being sued by Idaho voters or the teachers depending on how they decide. In our opinion, and in the opinion of everyone we've talked to, including Tom Luna, the teachers deserve to be paid. But if the law that provides for those bonuses has been voted down and that vote is certified on **November 21** the question remains whether school districts can legally send out the checks after that date. We are hoping they never have to make that decision. Teachers deserve to be paid based on merit and results in addition to their regular salaries. Not only this year! But every year! A "yes" vote on Proposition 2 leaves nothing in question. With a "yes" vote, deserving teachers will receive their bonuses now and in the future. That is how it should be.

### The teachers deserve to be paid!

As we pointed out last week, the Unions are trying to prevent their own teachers from getting bonuses. Their argument is that all available funds should be put into teachers' base pay and that there should be no merit pay that rewards better results. Their argument is obsolete. Both Democrats and Republicans disagree with the Unions on this. Better teachers deserve better pay. We encourage everyone to make sure that teachers receive their bonuses. A "yes" vote on Proposition 2 will accomplish exactly that.

### A well-financed campaign.

The Union has committed to spend millions of dollars to defeat the Students Come First legislation and is putting out reams of misinformation on radio, TV, and the Internet. Money is pouring into Idaho from Union headquarters in Washington, D.C. to defeat Propositions 1, 2 and 3. The state can't match the millions being spent by the Union. In fact, there are no state budget dollars allocated for educating voters! That leaves the job up to the public to inform itself. Earlier in our nation's history it would have been the responsibility of the press to inform the public. But most of Idaho's newspapers have long ago followed the national press' example of promoting a more liberal agenda. Therefore, the press seems to be content to sit idly by while the Unions misinform voters. A few organizations and businesses are trying to fund efforts to get out accurate information. This ad, funded by Melaleuca, is one of those efforts. Our information regarding this legislation comes directly from the Department of Education as well as supporting documents and resources. We are doing our best to stay informed and to communicate that information accurately and fairly to the public. We are also trying to educate the public as to the Union's maneuvering and distortions of fact. Other organizations are trying to do their part. But, truthfully, we are no match for the giant NEA. We hope that the public will take an interest in this very important issue for our children and for future generations. And when it comes to conflicting information, we believe we can trust our elected officials substantially more than we can trust the propaganda from the Union bosses or the liberal press. For us, that is a pretty easy choice.