



# THE COMMUNITY PAGE

## The *Coeur d'Alene Press*, *The Times-News* of Twin Falls and the *Idaho Statesman* Endorse Tom Luna

### Make the Educated Choice for State Superintendent

Taxpayer anxiety and the current state educational system show that there are five main areas of concern facing the winner of the upcoming November election:

- Idaho teacher salaries don't measure up when compared to the rest of the country, and rural areas are having difficulty attracting and retaining quality teachers
- Increasing enrollment statewide is leading to overcrowded classrooms in many communities
- The changing workforce demands more and improved math and science courses so children can better compete
- High school graduation rates are high (90%), but success rates plummet as Idaho students enter college
- Increased costs are raising serious questions as to how prudently tax and budget dollars are being put to use

There is little question that there must be a change in the status quo if these issues are to be resolved, and republican candidate **Tom Luna has won the endorsement of many Idaho Lawmakers as well as the editorial boards of three respected papers:** *The Idaho Statesman*, the *Coeur d'Alene Press*, and *The Times-News* of Twin Falls. As stated by the *Idaho Statesman*, "He offers unique ideas, has identified places where money can be put to better use and—most importantly—is more likely to get results with the Legislature."

Democratic candidate Jana Jones, the superintendent's chief deputy believes that the department should continue down the path started by Superintendent Marilyn Howard. As the *Coeur d'Alene Press* notes, Jones is "well versed in the status quo."

The worry comes when considering the superintendent's biggest job—advocating for a budget that consumes

nearly half of the state's general fund and competes against mushrooming demands from Medicaid, prisons, and other high-profile concerns. Jana Jones has little experience in these waters, and her predecessor's budget requests, as the *Idaho Statesman* notes, "...were largely ignored during her eight years in office."

#### Instead of continuing down the same path, Tom Luna offers new ideas.

As pointed out by the *Idaho Statesman*, "[Luna] will use charter schools to help absorb enrollment increases, to offer specialized education and to save money.

"He offers lawmakers options for compensating teachers. He wants quality teachers to get higher pay, but he has other ideas to debate, such as tax credits for educators and a merit pay system based on the entire school's performance instead of an individual's."

The *Statesman* went on to say, "Luna



wants to trim administrative expenses, including staffing in the state department, and claims he will put any savings directly into the classroom. Jones, on the other hand, says Idaho is 'in the ballpark' when it comes to appropriate administrative services in most of our schools."

Neither candidate favors forced

school district consolidation, but, as pointed out by the *Statesman*, Luna also believes in giving districts an incentive: "Districts that consolidate could keep the savings and spend the money where they have needs. Jones admits consolidation would save tax dollars but she would leave that decision to those districts."

*The Times-News* adds, "We don't see Jones pushing ambitiously on key measures."

Opponents are quick to criticize Luna's background, citing that Jones has the better academic resume. But in reality, State Superintendent is not a teaching position, it's a management one. The *Idaho Statesman* sums up their position by saying, "We favor Luna's successful rise in business and his life experiences for his position, which requires an efficient business model when managing a billion-dollar budget."

The *Coeur d'Alene Press* echoed the sentiment, saying, "**Republican Tom Luna represents an opportunity for a new look at the head of Idaho's public education system. Luna brings a business perspective to the business of running this critical \$1 billion annual investment.**"

It's time for an improvement in our state education system. Three major papers and a score of lawmakers believe Luna is the candidate most capable of positive, long-term change, **and we agree.**

