



THE COMMON INTEREST REPORTS:

MEMBERS' VIEWS ON K-12 EDUCATION FUNDING

100 randomly assigned members of The Common Interest reviewed briefing materials on the topic and then answered a questionnaire. The questionnaire asked members about:

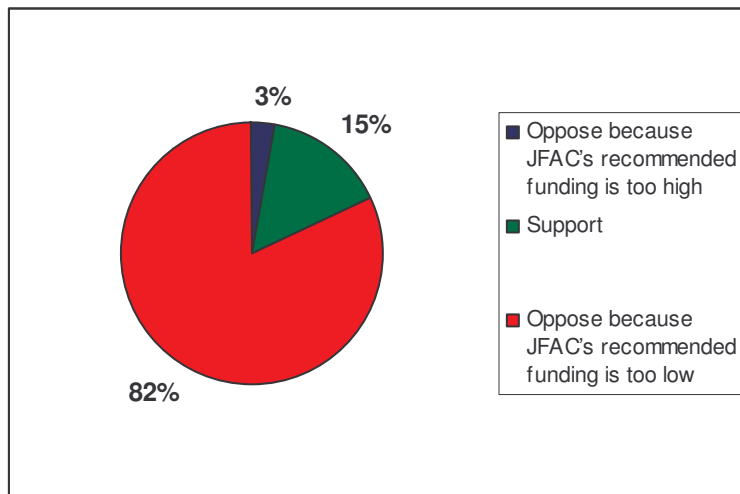
1. Preferred Overall Funding Levels
2. Preferred Funding Priorities

The briefing materials are available at: www.TheCommonInterest.org

Here are the views of those 100 members:

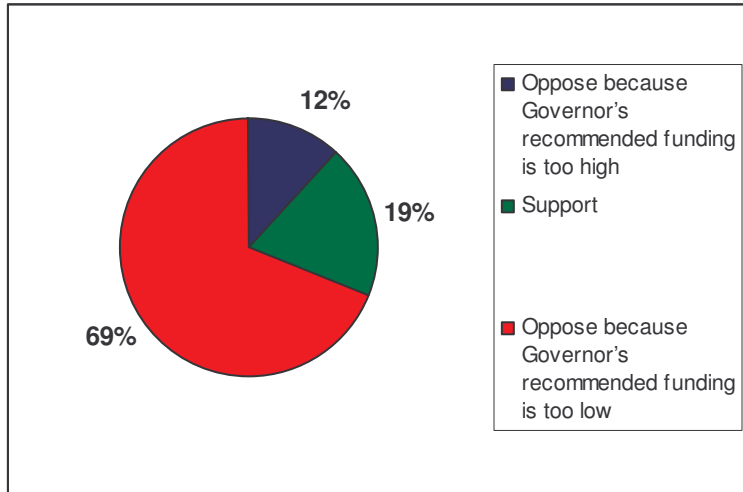
I. OVERALL FUNDING LEVELS

Do you support or oppose JFAC's overall recommended level of funding for K-12 education (\$987 million; a 2.3% increase over this year)?



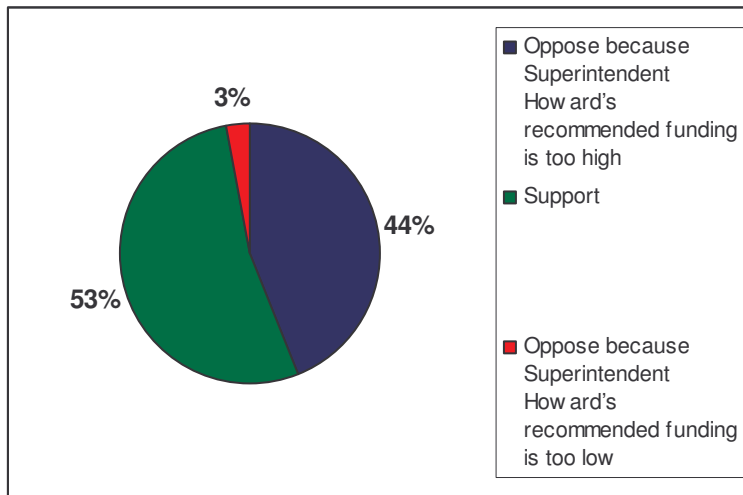
Position of The Common Interest: Oppose JFAC's level of K-12 funding because too low

Do you support or oppose Governor Kempthorne’s overall recommended level of funding for K-12 education (\$999 million, 3.6% increase over this year)?



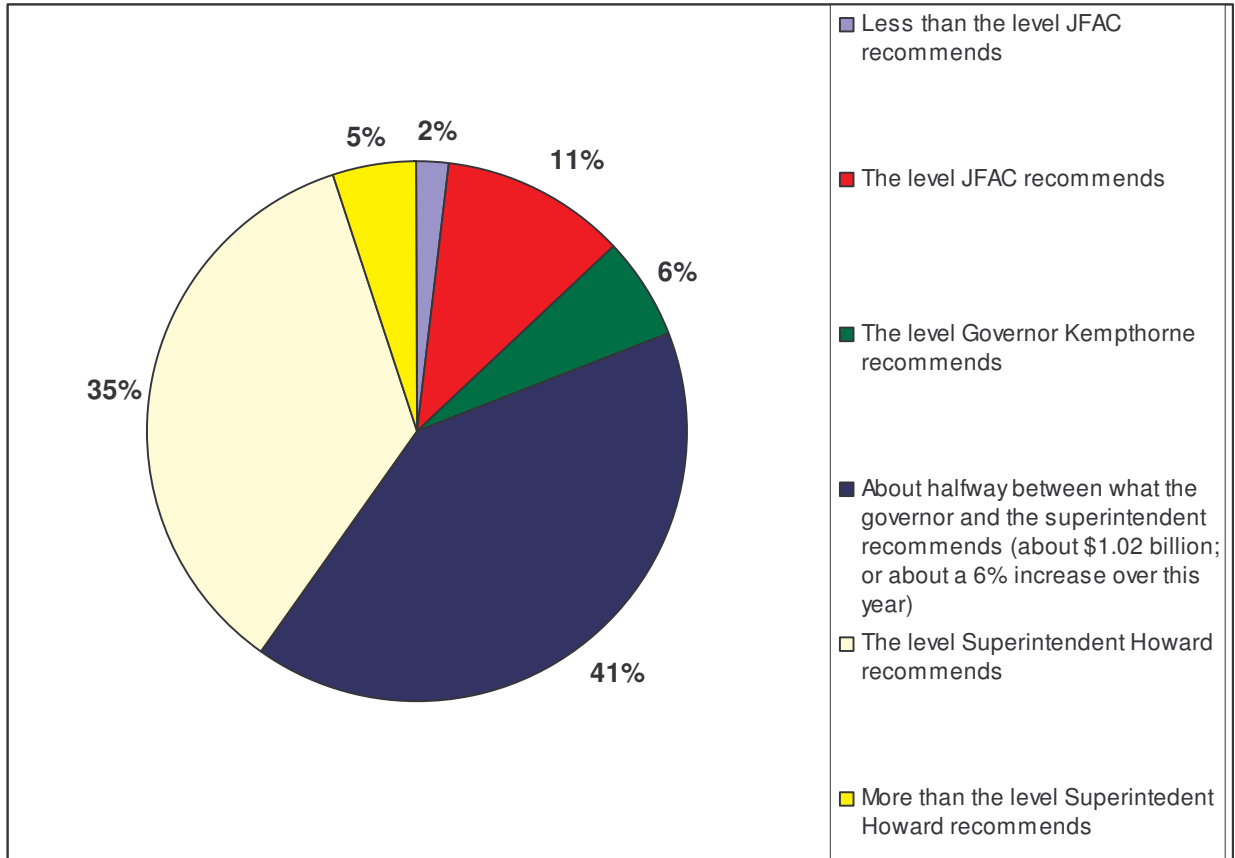
Position of The Common Interest: Oppose Governor Kempthorne’s level of K-12 funding because too low

Do you support or oppose Superintendent Howard’s overall recommended level of funding for K-12 education (\$1.05 billion; an 8.8% increase over this year)?

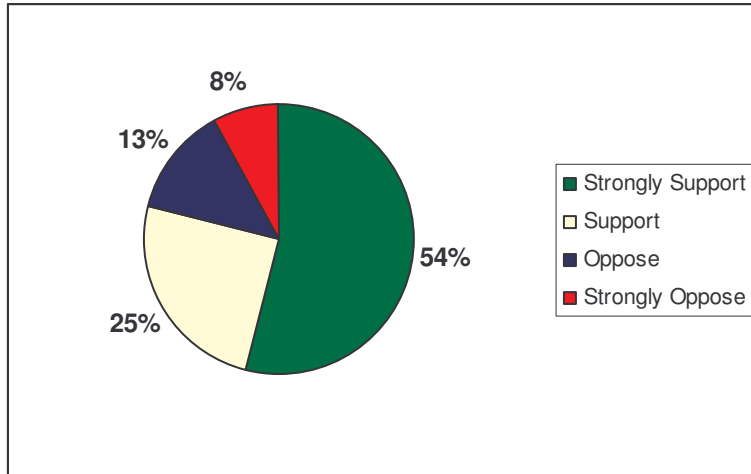


Position of The Common Interest: Neither support nor oppose (The Common Interest only takes positions that 60% or more of it’s members support)

Which level of funding do you most strongly support?



Extending the 1-cent temporary sales tax increase for one month (instead of ending June 30, 2005, it would end of July 31, 2005) would provide more than the \$12 million in overall K-12 spending that Governor Kempthorne recommends beyond what JFAC recommends. Do you support a one-month extension of the 1-cent sales tax for increased K-12 funding?

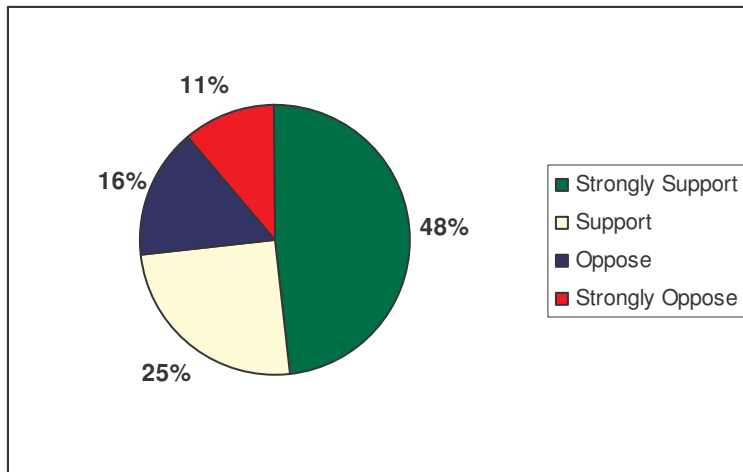


Total Support 1-month extension: 79%
Total Oppose 1-month extension: 21%

Position of The Common Interest:

Support 1-month extension of 1-cent sales tax for increased K-12 funding

Extending the 1-cent temporary sales tax increase for three months (instead of ending June 30, 2005, it would end of September 30, 2005) would provide over \$45 million in revenue, which would be most of the \$63 million in overall K-12 spending that Superintendent Howard recommends over what JFAC recommends. Do you support a three-month extension of the 1-cent sales tax for increased K-12 funding?

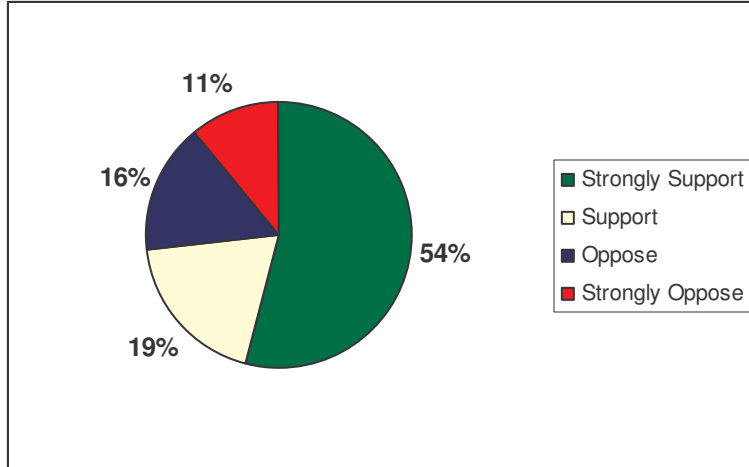


Total Support 3-month extension: 73%
Total Oppose 3-month extension: 27%

Position of The Common Interest:

Support 3-month extension of 1-cent sales tax for increased K-12 funding

Extending the 1-cent temporary sales tax increase for four months (instead of ending June 30, 2005, it would end of October 31, 2005) would provide roughly all of the \$63 million in overall K-12 spending that Superintendent Howard recommends over what JFAC recommends. Do you support a four-month extension of the 1-cent sales tax for increased K-12 funding?

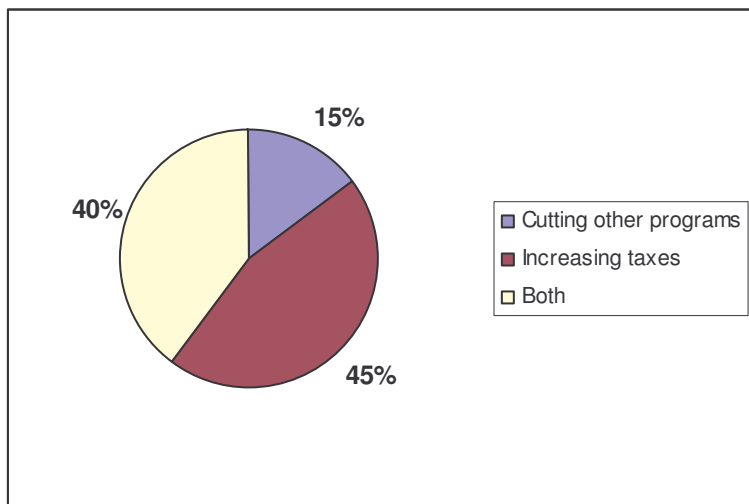


Total Support 4-month extension: 73%
 Total Oppose 4-month extension: 27%

Position of The Common Interest:

Support 4-month extension of 1-cent sales tax for increased K-12 funding

If the state were to fund K-12 at a higher level, where do you think the additional funding should come from?



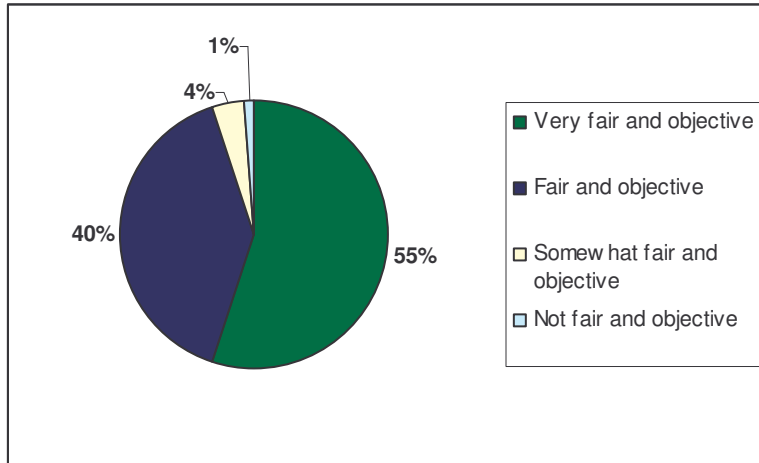
FUNDING PRIORITIES

The 100 members randomly assigned to K-12 education funding rated the importance of each of 14 spending priorities on a scale from “1”—Not Important to “4”—Very Important.

K-12 Funding Priorities						
Rank	Average Rating	Very Important (4)	Important (3)	Somewhat Important (2)	Not Important (1)	<p>Note: All % increases are increases in funding for next year relative to the current year. Enrollment, and thus funding needs, are projected to increase 2.2%.</p> <p>Funding Priorities in Blue not Included in JFAC Budget</p>
1	3.57	74%	16%	6%	5%	Gov’s recommendation of 2.6% increase in state contribution to teacher, administrative, and support staff salaries
2	3.28	54%	27%	15%	5%	Gov’s recommendation of 4.4% increase in discretionary funds for school districts
3	3.13	56%	18%	13%	14%	Superintendent’s recommendation of additional 2.3% increase in state contribution to teacher, administrative, and support staff salaries over Gov’s recommendation, for a total of a 4.9% increase
4	3.10	40%	34%	23%	3%	JFAC’s recommendation for 13% increase in technology and remediation funding for schools
5	3.02	44%	29%	12%	15%	Gov’s & Superintendent’s recommendation of \$1 million for teacher training for special education students in mainstream classrooms
6	2.96	42%	27%	17%	14%	Gov’s & Superintendent’s recommendation of additional technology funding for schools beyond JFAC’s recommendation for a total of \$12.4 million
7	2.91	43%	23%	13%	19%	Superintendent’s recommendation for \$2 million in beginning teacher support (\$0 this year)
8	2.89	32%	33%	26%	9%	JFAC’s recommendation for additional 6.5% increase in discretionary funds for school districts beyond what the Gov recommends (for a total increase of 10.9%)
9	2.81	34%	25%	30%	11%	Gov’s recommendation for same funding for Idaho Digital Learning Academy as this year
10	2.77	37%	21%	25%	17%	Superintendent’s recommendation for additional funding for remediation (\$0 this year)
11	2.73	36%	25%	30%	11%	JFAC and Superintendent’s recommendation for 100% increase in funding for Idaho Digital Learning Academy beyond Gov’s recommendation for same funding as this year
12	2.71	34%	25%	17%	24%	Superintendent’s recommendation for additional 25.2% increase in discretionary funds for school districts beyond the 4.4% increase recommended by Gov and the 10.9% increase recommended by JFAC
13	2.48	26%	23%	22%	29%	Several hundred thousand dollars to retain 6-8 personnel with knowledge about the Idaho State Information Management

						System
14	2.31	13%	25%	44%	20%	Superintendent's recommendation for \$7.7 million for investments in Idaho State Information Management System

Did you think the briefing materials treated the issue fairly and objectively?



What would you like to say to Idaho legislators about this issue?

[Answers have been sorted thematically]

Education Funding is Important to Idaho's Future

Highly important to the future of the state.

Please consider education as an investment in Idaho's future, one that will pay vast dividends in many ways, such as: economic development; increased incomes; higher quality of life.

It is simply an investment in the future.

If you fail us now, you fail generations in the future.

You must plan for Idaho's future. You are not doing enough for education, in general. You are not doing enough for minority education, in particular.

The education of Idaho's youth is extremely important to our future. If we fail to adequately prepare these students, they will not be equipped to enter the college and workforce when they graduate from high school.

Educating our children is the most important priority for our state and country's future.

Education Funding Should be a High Priority

Education is the most important thing.

Our children's education should be one of our top priorities and our spending should reflect that.

There is simply no more important issue for Idaho that a properly funded and strongly supported education system. Lawmakers must do more, even if it means generating more revenue.

Education is the most important investment we can make, the better the quality, the better the resident; employee/income earner—hence better Tax base.

Yes, it is very important, just keep things in perspective--don't lose sight of all the other important areas our tax dollars are needed.

Fund education, find the money. Just do it.

I'm just a taxpaying citizen, not an expert on education funding. From my seat, I believe it's in everyone's interest to fund a quality education program.

Education Funding Now Will Lower Costs Later

Money spent upfront on education will save money spent on social services later on.

No doubt it is difficult for the legislature to increase funding for a long-term result. Perhaps if we increase our K-12 budget now we will not need to spend so much on health care for the poor and prisons in the future.

Although 45% of the Idaho state budget already goes to public school funding, perhaps by increasing that percentage we can in time DECREASE the 22% that goes to Health and Human services.

A good investment in Idaho's educational system may prevent us from having to pay more in other areas in the future, such as public safety and subsidizing lower income families.

Since at least 1987, prisons and Medicaid have had funding increases while funding for K-12 education has declined. The greater the number of educated people with jobs, the fewer people who will end up in prison.

Well-educated Idaho students who are equipped to hold decent jobs will not end up in our prisons.

K-12 funding should be given high priority. Adequate funding should decrease the amount spent on prisons and Medicaid in the future.

It does seem foolish to invest so much in prisons if we can stop the problem with better K-12 education in Idaho.

I find it appalling that we would rather spend more money on prisoners than we do for our children's education.

Support Education to Support Economic Development

If we want more adult wage-earners in Idaho, we must fund education.

All the investment in the world for economic/rural development will be wasted unless we provide an educated work force for business and industry. Education is where we will find the most bang for the buck.

The more we put into our schools the better the students, the better the students the better employees businesses can hire.

Education is the progenitor of the future economic development in this state.

Quality education is how Idaho can invest in its future, not providing tax expenditures for companies that may still leave.

We need more money for education, not tax breaks to bring in business.

Education is the key to a quality work force in Idaho; a quality work force is key to higher salaries for Idahoans.

Education is the cornerstone for economic development, citizen involvement in Idaho's future, and for keeping young people in the state.

If you we want to make Idaho a business friendly environment, the best place to start is with a functional K-12 school system.

The return on these investments will be higher than most budgetary issues.

Ideally, K-12 education funding should be increased to meet Superintendent Howard's requests. A strong system of education in Idaho will pay high dividends in attracting industry to the state.

Education is the key to success for our young citizens. If we are willing to give large tax incentives to attract and retain businesses, it is exceedingly important that our educational system be supported.

It looks like a lot of the problems with funding Idaho schools is due to poor economic development by families in Idaho.

Sustained economic development will not come unless we have an educated work force, no matter how big the business tax breaks.

Think of the long term: how to save elsewhere so education can have more eventually. Economic development could help.

Support Idaho's Educators

Teachers are the most important.

Teachers should get the same amount of salary increase as the rest of Idaho society. This is probably pretty close to the inflation rate 2-3%.

We must fund education at a higher level in order to attract good teachers to our state and retain the teachers we currently have.

Competitive salaries are crucial to retain and attract the best teachers, who are directly responsible for the quality of education in Idaho.

Teacher mentor programs are very successful in helping new teachers do a better job and in retention of new teachers. It's money well spent.

The more burdens put on teachers that are outside the realm of teaching take away from classroom teaching. Motivated and inspired teachers are the greatest way we can improve our education system.

Providing performance-based, rather than seniority-based, raises for teachers will provide better education for our students.

No more money for teachers until we have performance measures.

Experienced teachers have not had a pay raise in three years. They are bringing home more work because of NCLB and less actual pay. Bite the bullet and put some money into the system for experience!

It is important to keep in mind that technology is only as good as the people using it. We must fund salaries that will attract and keep the teacher that can utilize technology to enhance the classroom.

Teachers need higher salaries.

Teachers need a big raise! Idaho is a joke when it comes to teacher salaries.

Mentoring is extremely important and a necessary part of teacher education. It is mandated by the state and should be funded. Don't complain about the quality of education when you will not support it.

Support Idaho's Children

“No child left behind” should be more than a slogan. Our most vulnerable citizens—our children—deserve more than empty promises.

While the rest of the nation ages, Idaho is about third in the percentage of its residents who are of school age or younger. This means that our state must have a commitment to education.

The ranking of 45 is unacceptably low for a state that values children.

Don't shortchange the students of Idaho.

I am almost embarrassed to admit I went to school here in Idaho since we rank 45th, nearly last. Children are our future so I guess Idaho doesn't care if their future is in last place.

The best investment a government can make is in educating children.

Our kids need us to support them!

Support Sales-Tax Extension to Support Education Funding

I would rather have the sales tax rate remain at 6% so long as that additional 1% is reserved strictly for education, than to see it expire.

Please consider the importance of education over the inconvenience of a few months more 1% sales tax. A tax of this nature does not have much sting in relation to the benefit it would buy for our state.

Would gladly extend the penny sales tax to provide more financial support to K-12 funding.

Focus on long-term needs and stop trying to fund education on the cheap to, seemingly at all costs, avoid raising taxes. That's irresponsible behavior.

Support the Elmer Martinez bill to change and keep the sales tax, and then dedicate this revenue to education.

I believe the legislators should strongly consider extending the one cent sales tax to alleviate the stress on funding education and health care in the state.

Why must you sunset the penny increase in the general sales tax? If you study Idaho history, a general sales tax was never sunset.

The additional sales tax is a small price to pay for education funding. Legislators should seek responses from constituents about whether to retain or terminate the tax for this purpose.

Make the 1 cent temporary sales tax increase permanent

Hold the Line

I was unhappy to hear demands from teachers for increased salaries based on comparisons to other states where the cost of living and average income are much higher.

I see thousands of new property owners and taxpayers springing up in new houses in and around Boise, so I'm at a loss to understand why my taxes should be increased to pay for education.

Throwing more money at education in Idaho will not guarantee that our schools will become better centers of learning.

Consolidate schools and trim maintenance as you would do at home, before we are all taxed out of our homes. Schools already get some 75 % of our property taxes!

Throwing money at education is not the answer.

Education Funding to Maintain Status Quo

With rising gas prices and with increased enrollment, schools need additional funding just to stay afloat. We are losing ground to the rest of the world in education. Let's step up to the plate.

We must at least exceed funding needed to accommodate anticipated growth.

Miscellaneous

We must do better than 45th in the nation.

Listen to the people.

Technology in education is important if it makes teachers more efficient and effective. Some technology for kids is useful. Technology for kids in K-6 is overrated.

I like the way JFAC combined the technology and remediation budgets. Overall I think JFAC's budget is too small--I like the Governor's better.

As a recent former student I encourage the legislature to support the increases to teachers' salaries, discretionary spending, and overall budget as proposed by state Superintendent Howard.

More charters.

Consolidate the many school districts and ask for local accountability.

Consider a more fair distribution of the Land Grant bonus that school district #1 enjoys to address statewide funding issues.

Consolidate upper management in the school system to only one superintendent to a county. Leave local schools identity as is.

I think that getting the Alberson's Foundation involved in setting educational policy/goals has had a huge negative effect.

The annual battle over funding levels is so unfortunate. All the time goes to picking the right number, instead of to evaluating the outcomes of the money that is spent.

'Average' proficiency of Idaho students in reading and math (compared to the national averages) should not be a goal to shoot for or benchmark to measure success of our students.

Better education completes the loop for improving the state's education system.

Sustaining the quality of life in Idaho requires adequate support of public education.

Standards have now been developed for education in Idaho. We need to appropriately fund education to meet those standards.

Idaho will someday reap the consequences of increasing expectations coupled with decreasing commitment of resources by the legislature.

ABOUT THE COMMON INTEREST

The Common Interest is a grassroots, non-partisan, non-profit organization that aims to make government more responsive the interests of common citizens by:

- Reducing the influence of special interests
- Reducing partisanship

What We Do

As common citizens, we take five concrete steps together to accomplish these goals:

1. Members choose the issues before the state legislature that they feel are the most important to track.
2. The organization develops briefing materials on those issues.
3. Each member is randomly assigned to review the briefing materials for one issue each year and then to complete a questionnaire.
4. If a 60% or greater majority emerges either in favor or opposed to a given proposal, that becomes the official position of the organization. We communicate those positions to the legislature and keep a legislative scorecard.
5. Each member commits to holding elected officials accountable by voting in the primary as well as general elections.

Who We Are

Launched November 19, 2004, there are now over 550 members of The Common Interest. Members are moderates, conservatives, and liberals who come from across Idaho—from Bonners Ferry to Twin Falls and from Rexburg to Parma.

The founder and president is Keith Allred. A fifth-generation Idahoan who grew up in Twin Falls, Keith recently moved back to Idaho after being on the faculty at Columbia and then Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. An expert in mediation and conflict resolution, he currently the Frank Church Professor of Public Policy at BSU.

The founding board members are Laird Noh of Kimberly and Marguerite McLaughlin of Orofino. In November, Laird, a sheep rancher, retired from the Idaho Senate after representing the Magic Valley as a Republican for 24 years. Marguerite retired in 2000 after representing north-central Idaho as a Democrat first in the House for four years and then in the Senate for 18 years. Marguerite and her family run McLaughlin Logging. Both Laird and Marguerite earned sterling reputations for practical, independent thinking that transcended partisan politics.

Join Us

The Common Interest invites Republicans, Democrats, and Independents to join us in our effort to promote government by the people in Idaho. No donation is required. Members simply commit one hour of their time each year to studying out an issue and sharing their views and commit to voting in both the primaries and general elections.

You can learn more and join at: www.TheCommonInterest.org