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Quotes

"We need to be vocal in our support for continue funding for Idaho Public Television."
Signed, Colleen Cole

"OMG Stop with the FEAR FACTOR CRAP... why don't you take a WE CAN DO IT attitude instead. I could do it if you can't... I can provide the same level of service if you can't do it... trust me, you can do it and DO NOT cut any translators or do anything else you list..."
Signed, Glenn Dalton
January 20, 2010

"As Idahoans, Idaho Public Television is our valuable resource and worthy to retain state funding."
Signed, Zerelda Quintana

"Why not have a "dialogue" about the Governor's insane plane to cut funding for IPTV? Enclosed is an article showing that off air reception is actually going up. And in a recession, many are cutting cable and sat. TV. Proving once again the reason to support public television." <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/25/business/la-fi-rabbit-ears25-2009dec25>
Signed, Benjamin Reed



Elimination of State Funding Proposal

On Monday, January 11, Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter proposed in his 2010 State of the State Address and Budget Recommendations that seven state agencies, including Idaho Public Television, should lose its General Fund support over a period of four years. IdahoPTV would continue to be a state agency under the State Board of Education. Should this recommendation be adopted as proposed, the financial impact on IdahoPTV's ability to serve all of Idaho with the current array of services would be significant.

This proposal has been covered extensively by the state's press prompting literally thousands of Idahoans to contact state leaders with emails and letters. I am including the dozens of articles and columns in the IdahoPTV In The News section below.

On Tuesday, March 9, at about 9:30am MT/8:30am PT, the Joint Finance—Appropriations Committee (JFAC) is scheduled to vote on Idaho Public Television's fiscal year 2011 budget. The JFAC deliberation can be viewed live at:

<http://idahoptv.org/leglive/> .



FESTIVAL 2010 Opens Saturday, March 6, on IdahoPTV

— Annual On-Air Fund Raiser Is March 6-21

Idaho Public Television's largest fund raiser, FESTIVAL 2010, begins on March 6. This year's Festival is especially critical towards raising the funds that will enable services for the next year. More than 61% of IdahoPTV's operational budget comes from voluntary financial contributions from viewers across Idaho and six surrounding states. With corporate and foundation giving to IdahoPTV down this year, as well as support from the state of Idaho also down dramatically, Festival 2010 is an especially critical time.

To achieve our goal, we'll showcase a wide array of outstanding programs for sixteen days. A full listing of FESTIVAL 2010 programs and links to pledge your support are available on the IdahoPTV Web site at: http://idahoptv.org/support_new/membership/festival10.cfm

"During FESTIVAL we feature a number of specials as well as episodes from some of our regular series. These, along with IdahoPTV's own productions, provide a sampling of the kinds of programming we air throughout the year," says Kim Philipps, IdahoPTV director of marketing.

Philipps points out that the annual March fund-raiser and a December weekend event help secure a major part of IdahoPTV's operating budget.

"Idaho Public Television depends on private contributions, which make up 62 percent of our operating budget. FESTIVAL is our single largest fund-raising event of the year. It's critical that this campaign succeeds," Philipps says. "The money we raise during FESTIVAL helps pay for program acquisition and Idaho productions that viewers enjoy throughout the year."

"FESTIVAL 2010 is a time for people to become partners with us, to make an investment in television worth watching," Philipps says. "Remember, we're here for you."



"WOODEN BOATS, WONDROUS LAKES"

"These boats have a story to tell. Each one of them has a story to tell. That's the beauty of it."
--B. K. Powell, Pres. Inland Empire Chapter of the American Classic Boat Society

—Airs Thursday, March 11th at 8 p.m. MT / 7 p.m. PT

In this hour long Outdoor Idaho special, we tell the personal stories behind the beautiful wooden vessels on display at boat shows throughout the state. Chris Craft, Century, Lyman and Garwood . . . these are some of the classic motor boats of years past. They first cruised on Idaho's lakes more than fifty years ago. Now they're back on the water in full splendor, rescued from dust covered garages and farmers fields.

The meticulously restored vessels are a piece of history that still are used on a regular basis. From Pend Oreille to Payette Lake, classic wooden boats can be seen both in shows and out on the water. They glide over the waves like elegant pieces of art, rekindling memories of days gone by. They are a perfect fit for the stunning scenery of Idaho's wondrous lakes. Their graceful lines, rumbling sound and nostalgic beauty are so alluring that many are smitten with an all-consuming passion for these vintage boats.

Tune in to learn why so many people love these boats.



Expanded "Capitol of Light" Documentary Documents the Return to Glory of Idaho's State Capitol



Actor M.A. Taylor as John Tourtellotte.

"The great white light of conscience must be allowed to shine and by its interior illumination make clear the path of duty." John E. Tourtellotte

Airs Wednesday, March 10, at 7:00 p.m. MT/PT

Known affectionately as "the people's house" Idaho's Capitol reopened its doors in January, after a restoration and expansion project that took more than two years and cost \$120 million.

"Capitol of Light" documents that effort, including the addition of the new underground "wings" for senators and representatives. This expanded 40 minute program also brings to life the remarkable John Tourtellotte, who teamed up with Charles Hummel to create what one critic called "the best of America's capitols."



Idaho State Capitol at night. [Photo credit: Kevin Rank]

Actor M.A. Taylor became John Tourtellotte for this production, with the Capitol and the old Carnegie Library providing the backdrop for the re-enactments.

The documentary also explores the rich and colorful history surrounding Idaho's search for a capitol, tracking events dating back to the 1860's that threatened to split the state asunder. To learn more, visit www.idahoptv.org/capitoloflight/.

the buzz



—On Monday, March 1, Idaho Public Television was notified that we have been awarded seven Telly Awards. The Telly Awards are one of the nation's most prestigious showcase for television and films. I would like to congratulate our talented production staff for their outstanding efforts.

Show

Outdoor Idaho: Winter Play
 Outdoor Idaho: Wolves in Idaho
 Barbara Morgan: No Limits
 Outdoor Idaho: Cascade Corner
 Kevin Kirk & Onomatopoeia
 Outdoor Idaho: Mining Idaho
 Outdoor Idaho: Let Me Be Brave

Category

Travel/Tourism
 Nature/Wildlife
 Education
 Travel/Tourism
 Entertainment
 Information
 Social Responsibility

Award

Silver
 Bronze
 Bronze
 Bronze
 Bronze
 Bronze
 Bronze

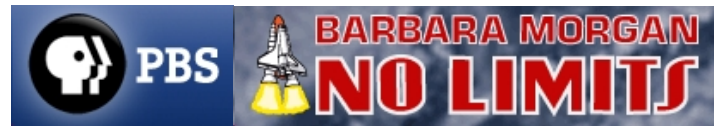


—On Saturday, January 14, the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA) honored three IdahoPTV projects, the greatest number of any local public television. Productions honored were Outdoor Idaho: Extreme Sports (Documentary), D4K (Education) and Kevin Kirk & Onomatopoeia (Performance). The NETA Awards are the pre-eminent awards for local public television stations.



—On February 19, 2010, the PBS NewsHour featured a segment reported by Marcia Franklin and photographed by Jay Krajic on the Boise area missionaries' return from Haiti. I'd like to congratulate our talented staff for confidence that the NewsHour has in them to tell this timely story. You can view the segment at: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/jan-june10/haiti_02-09.html

—On March 1, 2010, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) distributed IdahoPTV's Barbara Morgan: No Limits to stations nationwide. This is the second nationwide airing for this program.



—National Polls Name PBS Most Trusted Institution, PBS KIDS Most Educational Media Brand for Children

PBS/public television ranks high in the public eye on both trust and educational value, according to two new national polls released this week.

For the seventh consecutive year, the public has named PBS the nation's most-trusted organization from a list of other nationally known institutions. Forty-five percent of the respondents said they trusted the organization "a great deal," with other choices ranging below that number. In addition, PBS KIDS earned the #1 ranking as the most educational media brand for children, receiving 21 percent of the top ratings from respondents.

"Once again people have spoken out to give their overwhelming support for the service mission of PBS nationally and Idaho Public Television locally," IdahoPTV General Manager Peter W. Morrill said.

The research was commissioned by PBS and conducted in December 2009 and January 2010 by the non-partisan international research company GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media.

PBS ranked at the top in public trust among every age group, ethnicity, income and education level measured. PBS also ranked first among respondents as the most trusted source of news and public affairs among broadcast and cable sources.

"In a media world where profits drive decisions, public media stands alone in its singular focus on the American public and not the bottom line," said Paula Kerger, PBS President and CEO. "PBS does more to serve the needs of our modern democracy with trusted, independent journalism and does more to help children succeed than any other media enterprise."

For more information on the results of the polls, go to www.idahoptv.org/about/reports.cfm

Idaho Public Television broadcasts a 24-hour-a-day over-the-air schedule of programs on four channels to more than 97 percent of Idaho households through a system of five transmitters and 42 translators. The schedule includes series and specials from PBS, IdahoPTV and other public television distributors.

PBS, with its nearly 360 member stations, offers all Americans — from every walk of life — the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches more than 110 million people through their local stations and nearly 19 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances.

GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media is a division of GfK Custom Research North American specializing in customized public opinion polling, media and communication research and corporate reputation measurement — in the U.S. and globally.

—I'd like to thank the Idaho Statesman for the partnership to publicize to their readers at www.idahostatesman.com about Idaho Legislature Live. I'm including a frame grab of our efforts.



2010 Contest

—IdahoPTV Accepting Entries For PBS Go! Writers Contest

Submit Entries by March 25

Young writers and illustrators — along with their creativity, originality, enthusiasm and natural story-telling abilities — are wanted for the 2010 PBS GO! Writers Contest.

This will be Idaho Public Television's 16th Annual Writers Contest, which encourages students in kindergarten through third grade to pair their stories with original illustrations to create their own literary masterpieces. Entry deadline is March 25.

The PBS KIDS GO! Writers Contest extends the powerful tradition and annual success of the 15-year national Reading Rainbow Young Writers and Illustrators Contest. Although the name has changed, the contest remains primarily the same.

All stories submitted to IdahoPTV are judged in Idaho and all entrants will receive certificates for their participation. Idaho winners will be recognized locally. First place winners also will compete at the national level for laptop computers, digital cameras and mp3 players.

To enter:

- Get an entry form and contest rules at any public library in Idaho or download one from the IdahoPTV Web site: <http://idahoptv.org/kids/writerscontest.html>
- Submit a story with at least five illustrations: 50 to 200 words for kindergarten and first grade, or 100 to 350 words for second and third grade. A child who cannot write can dictate to an adult. Stories can be typed or hand-written.
- A signature of a sponsoring teacher or parent must accompany each entry.
- Entries must be received by March 25 at Idaho Public Television, PBS KIDS GO! Writers Contest, P.O. Box 443101, Moscow, ID 83844-3101.
- Entries are judged on originality, creative expression, storytelling and integration of story and illustrations.

The annual contest attracts some 900 entries in Idaho each year and more than 40,000 entries nationally.



IdahoPTV Mailbag

facebook

Thank Tan's 3-minute overview of the State Budget process was terrific. Rarely is so much useful information presented so well and so briefly. Perhaps Ms. Tan and her cohorts should run for Legislative office. One could imagine that they might actually bring the session to a successful conclusion by the end of March!

Signed, Kevin Keller
February 5, 2010

I just want to commend IPTV for providing video transmission of JFAC proceedings to citizens throughout the state. Hard copy minutes of JFAC proceedings are not available until mid-summer, well after the legislative session so your service is an opportunity for citizens to be better informed without news media selective reporting. I have even taken the opportunity to pose a question via email to a member of the JFAC committee during the meeting and had the question asked of the speaker. Truly taking citizen participation to a better level. Thank you for your service.

Signed, Darby Harris
January 26, 2010

Hi. I wish to express my opinion regarding the addition of the live Legislature broadcast. It is like watching paint dry. The program guide says that European Journal was to be broadcast at 11:30 am today but I find the Legislature broadcast instead. Please drop the Legislature programming as we can see what's going on there by going to their own web site. Thanks for your time and the great job you all do.

Signed, Henry
January 19, 2010

Greetings from cloudy north Idaho! I am unable to attend the Capitol Building celebrations and rededication event this week as I am in Coeur d'Alene tending my ailing mother (I am happy to report that she is on the mend!) Last night I watched the PBS presentation, Capitol of Light, and it made me feel so very proud! I am also very thankful for the opportunity to have had a courtside seat the past few years while the project went from plan to construction to completion. You were an amazing team, and the people of this state will benefit from your efforts for decades to come.

All me best,

Vivian Otero-Epley, Administrator, Idaho State Building Authority

January 8, 2010



Reading is Beautiful

By Marcia Franklin, Producer

January 22, 2010

We had a caller on our Good Winter Reading show I wished I could have kept on the line longer, but we were running out of time. Leevon, a 15-year old aspiring writer from Lewiston, called to ask my guests, authors Kim Barnes and Mitch Wieland, what advice they had for him.

"Write what matters and keep yourself in the chair and don't leave the room," said Barnes, whose lovely memoir about growing up along the Clearwater River, *In the Wilderness*, documents her tempestuous teen years in Leevon's own hometown of Lewiston, as she struggled to reconcile the love of her family and her inability to embrace her parents' Pentecostal faith.

"I would also say read as much as you can," said Wieland, an author of two novels who enjoys mentoring students in the MFA program at Boise State. Interestingly, one of the main characters in his most recent book, *God's Dogs*, is named Leevon.

That kind of encouragement can have a big impact. When I was about 9, and going to elementary school in Washington, DC, I was chosen to attend a young writers' camp. Up until then, I don't think I had thought of my interest in writing and reading as a potential career, and I wouldn't have that level of confidence for many years. But so proud was I to be chosen that I kept the button I received, which said, "Reading is Beautiful."

I consider that camp, of which I have only hazy images, as a turning point for me. Someone (I wish I could remember who) had decided that I had potential writing talent, and that stayed with me.

Fortunately, as I continued my education and decided that I wanted to write as a living, I had support from my parents. Many children don't. I talked to someone recently who ran a young writers' camp last year. She received an application from a boy who really wanted to go, but his father wouldn't let him, because he didn't think his son should be spending time on creative writing.

I worry that we are becoming a country that is de-emphasizing the humanities in our secondary school and college curriculums, in favor of classes and majors that are supposedly better for getting jobs, like math and science. But learning to write often and well can serve you in any career, and just as importantly, in your personal life. Keeping a diary can allow you to explore your fears and goals, and who knows; that poem you write your girlfriend just might be the final offering that convinces her to become your wife!

Back to Leevon. I decided to try and find him, and was able to. We had a delightful phone conversation, during which he told me he's "thrilled" to write, and that he can turn most anything into a story. And this is a student who knows "place;" he loves Idaho so much that he's put up maps of the state all over his room, including his ceiling!

Leevon says he recently received a fortune cookie that read, "Pick one goal and stick with it." He's decided that he wants to be a "famous author," so that's why he called in.

I'm going to put him in touch with the director of the writing camp. And both Mitch and Kim have graciously agreed to answer any additional questions Leevon might have, in order to help him with this journey of exploration. Thank you! And thanks to Leevon for calling in and for having a dream. Good luck!

From the young man who called in on the Good Winter Reading Dialogue.

I would like to say thank you so much for doing what you did to track me down and contact me and even give me a couple of those authors e-mail addresses. I really appreciate it. I never thought in a billion years some one would do what you did. You should take yourself out to a nice restaurant. Because of what you did I was able to contact Kim and Mitch and I asked them to send me the address of their publisher so I could get the copy of my story sent off. One thing I meant to tell you when I was talking to you over the phone was, even though you said creating shows are expensive, if in the future Idaho PTV does want to create a new show I was going to suggest that a good show would be one called "Idaho Calls" or "Idaho's Calling" in which it could be about different campgrounds, RV-parks and recreation areas and it shows different events that happen around the area such as skiing, rafting and boating tours. Kind of like "Outdoor Idaho" except that Outdoor Idaho shows episodes of one specific topic such as just camping or just skiing. If you know what I mean. If at any time Dialogue was going to have another episode on reading or books I would love to be on it. If there are any young people watching seeing me on the show will let them know that young people can write books. Well I would keep writing but I'm probably boring you. Have a nice day.

Signed, Leevon~



New OUTDOOR IDAHO Featured "Hometown Ski Hills"

- Aired, Thursday, February 18, at 8:00/7:00 p.m. MT/PT
- Repeated, Sunday, February 21, at 7:00 p.m. MT/PT
- See it in HD Thursday, February 18, at 9:00/8:00 p.m. MT/PT

Cozy, comfortable community ski areas are scattered throughout Idaho, each with its own story and predominately local clientele. Independent producer Jeff Beaman tells the story of three of these ski hills for OUTDOOR IDAHO — Bogus Basin, just north of Boise, Little Ski Hill by McCall and Pomerelle near Albion.

"The three areas profiled each present a variation on the community ski area theme," says Beaman, a former Idaho Public Television staff member. "We talked to former Olympians, skiers and boarders, operators and historians to learn what makes each of these ski areas unique and why it is one of the greatest assets a community can have in the north country."

The show premiered Thursday, February 18, at 8:00/7:00 p.m. MT/PT, and repeated Sunday, February 21, at 7:00 p.m. MT/PT on the traditional analog channel and IdahoPTV's digital sub-channel 1. It was seen in high definition on Thursday, February 18, at 9:00/8:00 p.m. MT/PT. You can watch the program in its entirety:

<http://video.idahoptv.org/program/1354309429/>

This new OUTDOOR IDAHO episode turns a lens toward one of the older community areas. Bogus Basin has its beginnings in the 1940s when city fathers get behind an effort by winter sports enthusiasts to establish a nearby ski area. With Bogus Basin accommodating downhill skiing, boarding, tubing, snowshoeing and Nordic skiing, the Treasure Valley has one of the highest percentages of people who call themselves skiers/boarders in the nation.

Born of the need to have something to alleviate cabin fever, the Little Ski Hill has been the cradle for the Olympic careers of several natives of the mountain town. Volunteers from the area help keep costs down and things running smoothly with minimal staff. The town's children are able to jump on a bus after school to head for the hill, get outdoors and learn to ski.

Pomerelle's community extends from Idaho Falls to the east, Glens Ferry to the west, small towns in Utah and Nevada to the south, and the agricultural towns of the magic Valley to the north. The family-run regional ski area focuses on partnering with school systems to teach people to ski who otherwise would not have the opportunity — all the while offering some of the greatest snow on earth.

"Idaho will always hold a special place in the history of downhill skiing. Sun Valley, the country's first destination ski resort, guarantees that. But it's the community ski hills where people first learn to have fun in the snow," says Bruce Reichert, executive producer and host. "Sometimes these fields of dreams can involve entire communities."



All Dialogue programs can be viewed at: <http://video.idahoptv.org/program/1354309346/>

The Dialogue Web site is located at: <http://idahoptv.org/dialogue/>

Filmmaker Michael Hoffman

—Airs Thursday, March 4, at 8:30 p.m. / 7:30 p.m. MT/PT

Marcia Franklin talks with Idaho filmmaker Michael Hoffman, whose latest movie, *The Last Station*, has been nominated for two Academy Awards. The Oscars air on Sunday, March 7th on ABC.

Based on a novel by Jay Parini of the same name, *The Last Station* chronicles the final year in the life of Russian writer and philosopher Leo Tolstoy, who was locked in a battle with his wife Sophia about the rights to his works. Tolstoy is surrounded by acolytes who want him to leave the copyrights to his major novels such as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* to the Russian people, while Sophia wants the Tolstoy family to keep the rights.

Hoffman, who wrote and directed the script, shuttled for years between Boise and Germany, where the film was financed and made. He talks with Franklin about why he was attracted to the story, the process of making the film, and what it was like to direct Helen Mirren and Christopher Plummer, who play the Tolstoy family. Both are nominated for Academy Awards.

This is the third Dialogue conversation Franklin and Hoffman have had about his works since 1999.

February 25, 2010

Efficiencies in Corrections and Parole

How can Idaho's correctional system be downsized? Can we make the pardons and parole system operate more efficiently? Host Joan Cartan-Hansen looked at new reports evaluating how Idaho deals with prison inmates and ways of releasing prisoners back into the community. Cartan-Hansen was joined by Correction Department Director Brent Reinke; Senator Elliot Werk (D-Boise), Co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee; Representative Darrell Bolz (R-Caldwell), Vice Chair of the House Appropriations Committee; and Olivia Craven, Executive Director of the Idaho Commission of Pardons and Parole.

February 18, 2010

Homelessness in Idaho

Thousands of people in Idaho are either homeless or on the verge of homelessness. Host Marcia Franklin talked with a previously homeless woman about her situation and with three shelter operators from different parts of the state about the trends they are seeing, how they are assisting their clients, and what the ongoing needs are for their facilities and for the homeless population.

Guests include: Jeff Conroy, executive director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul North Idaho in Coeur d'Alene; B.J. Stensland, director of Aid for Friends in Pocatello; Rev. Bill Roscoe of the Boise Rescue Mission; and Sarah Heinz, who was a resident at City Light Shelter in Boise and now lives in transitional housing operated by the same facility.

Last year's "Point in Time" survey showed that nearly 2,000 individuals in Idaho had no permanent home. This year's report, conducted the last week in January, is expected to show an increase in the number of homeless.

Idaho is the recipient of more than \$4.4 million in federal stimulus grants to assist in both people who have lost their home during the economic downturn as well as those in imminent danger of eviction. Guests discussed how to apply for that aid, and how it is being used.

February 11, 2010

Economic Trends 2010

The Federal Reserve Economic Index shows Idaho's economy has remained stable since last fall. Personal income rates and housing starts are both predicted to rise in 2010. Will this slow growth really make a difference to your pocketbook? Will state and federal efforts to spur job growth make a difference in the unemployment rate?

Host Joan Cartan-Hansen spoke with leading economists about the state of Idaho's fiscal health. Guests include Don Holley, Chair of the Department of Economics at Boise State University; Mike Ferguson, Chief Economist, Idaho's Division of Financial Management; Richard Gardner, Senior Fellow, Bootstrap Solutions; and Steve Peterson, Economist, University of Idaho.

February 4, 2010

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation

Host Marcia Franklin talks with Idaho Parks and Recreation Director Nancy Merrill about the future of her agency, which at one point looked like it would be eliminated.

Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter appointed Merrill, the former mayor of Eagle, ID, to her position in September, 2009. She oversees a \$38.4 million budget, 165 fulltime employees and several hundred seasonal employees.

A revised proposal, released on January 22, keeps the department whole, but calls for a reduction of 25 personnel and \$5 million in general funds.

Director Merrill, who speaks to the Joint Finance Appropriations Committee on Feb. 1, will discuss in more detail her plans to keep the agency running and parks open.

January 28, 2010

Improving Idaho's Educational System

Host Joan Cartan-Hansen looked at proposals to improve Idaho's education system. Cartan-Hansen was joined by two directors of the Education Alliance of Idaho, Skip Oppenheimer and Bob Lokken, and by Jamie MacMillian, executive director of the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation.

The Education Alliance of Idaho has some lofty goals. They include:

- * Idaho will be in the top 20 states in the rigor and relevance of its math and science requirements
- * Idaho will have broadband connectivity to every public school
- * All of the state's high school students will have the opportunity to graduate with up to 30 college general education or professional-technical credits
- * 60 percent of high school students will register as full- or part-time college students within one year of graduation

But how realistic are these proposals - especially on the heels of Gov. Otter's recent recommendation for budget cuts within the state's public schools? In these tight budget times, how will we pay for the proposals? And if we don't make these changes, what will happen to Idaho's students?

IdahoPTV in the News

The squeeze on Big Bird

By Melissa Maynard, Stateline.org Staff Writer

Thursday, March 04, 2010

<http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=465517>



Idaho Reports is a weekly news program about politics that appears all over the state on public television. Normally it's quite civil. But one recent show took an awkward turn when the host asked about Governor Butch Otter's proposal to eliminate the program's funding. "Can you give us an update," moderator Thanh Tan asked, "on where we stand in terms of the agencies that face a possible phase-out...which includes the agency that produces this program?" Guest Wayne Hammon, the state budget director, replied that "the governor felt he had no other choice."

Idaho Public Television already has seen its state funding cut by 61 percent since July 2008, necessitating layoffs, furloughs and the frequent airing of re-runs. The governor's proposal, according to the agency, would force it to reduce or eliminate most of its local programming—and cease serving many rural parts of the state altogether.

"We've had to take a look at everything we're doing in state government and asking the question, why?" Jon Hanian, a spokesman for Otter, says of the proposal. "We're looking at everything and asking, 'Is this or is this not a proper role of government?' We're also differentiating between things that we've started doing because it's nice and things that we must do because it's necessary."

The challenges that Idaho Public Television is facing are emblematic of the decisions that public television agencies and stations around the country will have to make if states decide that public television is no longer a business they can afford to be in. According to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), state and local funding for public television stations nationwide declined by \$36 million between 2008 and 2009. CPB forecasts an additional \$45 to \$49 million in state and local cuts for the upcoming fiscal year.

States have cut back on funding during previous economic downturns, says Mark Erstling, a senior vice president at CPB, but this downturn poses a new threat. "The revenue sources always made up the difference," he says. "This time around, everything is basically down." Total non-federal sources of revenue, including member donations and corporate underwriting, declined by \$200 million from 2008 to 2009. CPB is concerned that member donations may begin to decline more sharply, as they tend to be the last source of public broadcasting revenue to drop during economic downturns.

According to the Association of Public Television Stations (APTS), public TV stations in Florida, Louisiana, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Utah were among the hardest hit by cuts to state funding this year. Next year, APTS expects stations in a number of states to lose at least a quarter of their remaining state funding, including those in Idaho, Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Pennsylvania.

CPB's Erstling says the greatest immediate danger is to stations in states like Idaho, which serve sparsely populated areas that can't sustain themselves through corporate underwriting and individual donations. "You can really see a potential loss of service," he says. "We don't have enough funding to bail out all the stations that are coming to us asking for help and saying they're in financial distress."

In Idaho, Boise and its surrounding areas are responsible for 82 percent of the individual and corporate contributions the network brings in each year. "Very bluntly, the governor's proposal means that we would have to focus on the populated parts of the state," says Peter Morrill, the Boise station's general manager. Because of Idaho's challenging geography, Public Television is the only statewide broadcaster. No common satellite system exists to tie the state together, and the effect on far-flung regions of the state would be isolating.

Public television stations vary widely both in ownership and operating structure and in how much they rely on state funding. Ten states, including California and Massachusetts, provide no funding at all to public television stations, while annual appropriations in other states range from about \$2 million to about \$20 million. Some states and localities dedicate fees or taxes to public television, while others dedicate funding to particular types of programming, such as educational programming for children.

Even when state funding doesn't provide the bulk of a station's overall revenue pie, it often constitutes an important piece. Unlike most corporate, foundation and individual support, state money can frequently be used to fund less glamorous aspects of operating a television station, such as purchasing and maintaining transmitters and other necessary infrastructure and equipment.

Erstling says that stations can flourish under a number of different ownership models, but that transitioning from one to another needs to be done thoughtfully. "If states decide to get out of this business, they have a responsibility to do it in an organized manner," he says. "They have to manage that process and not just toss stations out there."

In New Jersey, Governor Chris Christie's transition team put forth a proposal to eliminate all funding for its state-owned and operated public television network in January, but the governor's official budget proposal for next year has not been released yet. "Everything's on the table, good programs as well as other cuts across the board," said Michael Drewniak, the governor's spokesman, when asked about implementation of zero funding for public TV.

For the second year in a row, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell's budget proposal has recommended eliminating all funding for public television. Last year, the outcome was a 90 percent decrease in state funding, and the dissolution of the Pennsylvania Public Television Network, the state agency with oversight authority for public television. One of the agency's primary functions had been to connect Pennsylvania's eight relatively independent public television stations and facilitate collaboration and content-sharing. Under the old system, says Kathleen Pavelko, president of WITF in Harrisburg, "stations could easily and at no additional expense air programs simultaneously and statewide." That capability doesn't exist anymore, at least for now, and the infrastructure and equipment the state purchased in 2000 to create it is out of commission.

All of this is happening at a time when a number of other conversations and transitions are taking place in the world of public media. Public broadcasting by its very nature isn't supposed to compete with commercial media; the idea is that public support enables forms of media that provide a clear public good but couldn't thrive on their own. Still, adapting to a media landscape that is increasingly multi-platform and high-tech is critical to public media's ability to carry out its mission and remain relevant. "We're asking a lot of public broadcasters at a time when they're less and less well-funded," says Ellen Goodman, a law professor at Rutgers School of Law and expert on public media. "On the other hand, public media hasn't always done a good job at articulating its mission and value, and is being forced to make a case for itself now in a way that should ultimately help clarify that mission."

Pavelko says that Pennsylvania's stations were originally shocked by the governor's proposal to drop the state's funding commitment to public television from 7.9 million to zero without warning—and assumed that it was being used as a bargaining chip. "Funding had gone up and down with the fortunes of the Commonwealth, but never before had a governor proposed eliminating all funding," she says. It soon became clear that the governor's office was serious about the proposal, however, and funding for public television became a topic of debate at public hearings about the budget and throughout the state's 100-day budget impasse. "We came away feeling well regarded," says Pavelko, "but also recognizing that we did not measure up as highly as we thought we did against things like lease protection and social services in general."

Some in the public broadcasting world are hoping the national broadband plan that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will present to Congress later this month will have positive implications for their fiscal futures. One of the problems the plan seeks to address is a projected shortage of certain frequencies of broadcast spectrum necessary for 3G mobile devices such as iPhones. The FCC has signaled that one component of the plan will involve the opportunity for broadcasters to relinquish a portion of their spectrum in return for some form of financial compensation. Trading spectrum for financial compensation is a tempting prospect for cash-strapped public stations and networks, but also one that might diminish their position in the media landscape down the road.

Wick Rowland, president of Colorado Public Television, says he is leery of any spectrum exchange. "You don't sell real estate if at all possible, and spectrum is beachfront property for us in the digital landscape," he says. But Rowland isn't closing the door entirely. "At some level, we can all be bought," he acknowledges. "Make the price high enough and the grants large enough and even I might change my tune about the sacrosanctness of my megabits."

WITF's Pavelko is more optimistic. She believes that mobile broadband devices are the future and is willing to listen carefully to any proposals that would put her station on better fiscal footing while also contributing to national broadband goals. "The question," she adds, "is will the compensation be adequate to position public television with the capital they need to survive and thrive in the broadband age."

OUR VIEW: Imagine that, Butch - politics is a rough 'sport'

Sandra Kelly, for the editorial board

Moscow Pullman Daily News

Posted on: Tuesday, March 02, 2010

<http://www.dnews.com//story/opinion/49629/>

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter isn't having fun in Boise. He's been bombarded by newspapers throughout the state for some of his budgetary decisions, and it's been hard on him.

Really, he just wants a little peace, love and happiness to reign over Idaho. A little compassion wouldn't be bad, either.

"This is a tough, tough position to be in," he said at an Idaho Press Club even last week. "I have to pick and choose, and when I made choices, I have to live with them. It's not fun."

Well, governor, for many Idahoans, things haven't been fun for a long time. Many of the decisions coming from the Legislature - and from you - are going to make things not only not fun for a lot of people in this state, but also downright scary.

"Just once instead of the headlines 'Otter cuts grade schools' or 'Otter cuts education,' I'd like to see the headline 'Otter obeys constitution.," he said.

Yes, governor, you are obeying the constitution. Article VII, Section 11 of the Idaho Constitution says the Legislature can't spend more than what is brought in. Pat yourself on the back. Way to go.

There are, however, a lot of ways to obey the constitution, and they don't all include gutting education or doing away with public television.

Education is the largest chunk of the state pie, so it's natural to think that taking a little here and a little there from the budget is OK. The problem is, that's been going on for years, and there's not much left from which to take.

Otter has said repeatedly that he won't raise taxes. That's a great sound bite, and almost a sure-fire way to get re-elected, but it may not be in the best interest of Idaho.

No one wants to pay more taxes, but it's certainly something that should be looked at. It's not popular, and the Legislature will take some heat for it, but at least looking into it is the right thing to do.

Otter has been in the political arena for a long time. He's been around long enough to know that when he stepped onto that stage he opened himself up to criticism and praise.

If it's too much for him, or if it's just not fun enough, he can always step down.

Top aide to Idaho governor: cost cutter or kingdom builder?

An Idaho CEO says Mike Gwartney threatened and strong-armed him. Some lawmakers aren't happy, either.

BY CYNTHIA SEWELL - cmsewell@idahostatesman.com

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Published: 02/28/10

The good friend and riding buddy that Gov. Butch Otter tapped to help him reshape government may be alienating state leaders in both parties and may soon have to defend his actions in court.

Mike Gwartney took over the Department of Administration in 2007 after a career at Boise Cascade and with the determination to run the state like a business.

And though few Idaho legislators would agree to talk on the record, many said displeasure with Gwartney is widespread in the Statehouse and does not stem from one or two specific instances, but from a pervasive pattern.

"It is the imperialistic attitude Mr. Gwartney brings to a lot of the projects he does," said Sen. Dean Cameron, co-chairman of the powerful budget committee.

One Idaho corporate executive says he's seen Gwartney's style up close. He says Gwartney has bullied him in person and blackballed his company from state contracts, and he has taken his case to court.

"We set aside a \$1 million war chest," said Greg Lowe, CEO of Syringa Networks, a telecommunications company. "And that's just for 2010."

Gwartney would not meet with the Statesman for this story. His staff said attorneys told him he shouldn't discuss anything to do with the Syringa lawsuit. Even when asked to respond to criticisms broader than the lawsuit, Gwartney would not agree to an interview - again citing advice from attorneys.

FROM A GENTLEMAN'S CLUB TO A COURTROOM

Lowe's dispute stems from a state contract for the Idaho Education Network, a statewide broadband system linking Idaho public schools, universities and businesses.

Syringa - a fiber-optic network provider formed by 12 rural Idaho phone utilities in 2002 - and a partner company bid in late 2008 for the project, which was estimated to cost some \$25 million over its first three years.

An independent review panel found the Syringa group was the least expensive and most technically proficient bidder, scoring the group's proposal well above that of fellow bidder Qwest in six of seven categories.

But Gwartney's agency awarded the project to both bidders in January 2009 - using Syringa's estimate that it would cost about \$570,000 a month to run the network (not Qwest's bid of \$854,000).

Six months later, though, Syringa officials wanted to know why they still hadn't been given one piece of the project or one dollar of its budget.

So Lowe and Syringa lobbyist Ken McClure met with Gwartney at Boise's members-only Arid Club on July 15, 2009.

According to Lowe and McClure, Gwartney warned against further pursuing complaints against the state.

"I'd sure hate to see the rest of your (state) business go away," Lowe says Gwartney told him.

"I've already written it off for 2010," Lowe replied.

"Good," Gwartney responded.

"I couldn't swear under oath that those were the exact words," said McClure, an attorney with the Boise firm Givens Pursley and a longtime Statehouse figure. "But they are very, very close and accurately convey the substance of the exchange."

Five days later, on July 20, Syringa filed notice that it could sue the state for awarding the contract illegally and for engaging in unlawful conduct. The lawsuit itself was filed in December against the state. The suit also named Qwest and Syringa's original partner, Tennessee-based Education Networks of America, saying they, too, played a part in Syringa being cut out of the contract.

The state denies Syringa's allegations. "Our attorneys are confident that we will prevail," said administration spokeswoman Teresa Luna.

Qwest, too, says the "suit is completely without merit."

"Qwest acted professionally and appropriately at all times during the bidding and award process and any accusation or insinuation to the contrary is false," said Qwest spokesman Bob Gravely.

LAWMAKERS ARE LOSING CONFIDENCE

During the decade Cameron has chaired the powerful Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee, he said, Gwartney is the only department head to blatantly defy the committee.

"For two years in a row, when Mr. Gwartney has been invited to come in front of the committee ... he's said, 'No, I'll send staff,'" said the Republican from Rupert. Cameron's district is home to Project Mutual Telephone, one of the members of the Syringa Network.

Earlier this month, as Gwartney's staff made the department's annual presentation to the budget committee, Gwartney did attend the hearing and made himself available to answer questions.

Cameron asked Gwartney to respond in writing about his role in the decision to phase out funding for the Idaho Digital Learning Laboratory and Idaho Public Television - both of which Otter's administration has said could duplicate services provided by the IEN.

Cameron also asked Gwartney to submit an updated business plan for his department - something Otter chastised IPTV and several other agencies for not doing. So far, Gwartney has not responded to either of Cameron's requests.

"An updated plan for 2010 will be made available to all legislators shortly. The final responses to the JFAC questions will be delivered at that time," Luna said on Friday.

"I think there's a belief that he can do whatever he wants to do, and if we don't approve the money É he'll get the governor to issue an executive order," Cameron said. "He'll do whatever he wants to do and the Legislature is a temporary pain in his backside."

Sen. Kate Kelly, a third-term Boise Democrat who is now Senate minority leader, was the only senator to vote against Gwartney's confirmation two years ago.

"Having worked with a number of directors of the Department of Administration during the years that I have served in state government, it is my observation that the current director manages the agency with less transparency, less stakeholder and public involvement in decision-making, and less respect for legislators and public employees," she said this week.

Assistant Senate Minority Leader Elliot Werk, another Boise Democrat, agrees.

"Mr. Gwartney led the charge to basically disembowel the benefits of the state employees, which aren't as generous as people think they are," Werk said.

Specifically, Werk cited Gwartney's cuts to part-time employee benefits that he said "devastated" colleges and universities and Gwartney's "mishandled" attempt to cut retiree medical benefits two years ago.

WINNING THE BID BUT LOSING THE CONTRACT

Today, the Idaho Education Network project is well into its first phase, with 56 of 200 high schools connected or in progress.

"The IEN is very proud of the work it has accomplished in its first seven months. ... 18,000 students now have access to high-speed broadband services. Over 20,000 hours of class time is being received and 765 credits are being earned," Luna said.

Syringa hasn't been given any of the work.

Lowe said he thinks his company's troubles started more than a year ago - at the same swanky member's-only club in Downtown Boise.

In December 2008, just days before the state was about to request bids for the multimillion-dollar network, Lowe was seated at a table with some high-powered companions, including Jason Kreizenbeck, the governor's chief of staff, and Cameron, one of the most influential overseers of state purse strings and a guest of Lowe at the club that night.

Lowe says he suggested that in order to protect Idaho taxpayers, the state should first conduct an inventory to determine which areas needed new or upgraded Internet service to avoid duplication of services already put in place by Syringa, Qwest and other companies.

Four days later, Lowe says, Gwartney pulled him into a hallway.

He "got aggressively in my face, telling me if I didn't keep my opinions to myself he would make sure we would never get any of the (state's) business," Lowe said.

The best reason Lowe can figure for the anger? The state was rushing to avoid missing a \$6.8 million federal payment for reimbursement for telecommunication services, which meant the IEN contract had to be in place by Feb. 12, 2009.

To do this, Gwartney issued an emergency declaration on Dec. 15, 2008, and put out the IEN bid request that evening - without Lowe's suggested inventory - with responses due Jan. 12, 2009.

After the state announced the award to Qwest and the Syringa group on Jan. 20, 2009, agency administrator Bill Burns sent an e-mail to Gwartney and other department staff: "I do believe we placed ourselves in this expedited process due to inadequate advanced planning."

Now, more than a year later, the state is undertaking the inventory Lowe recommended. In November, the state was awarded a federal grant to map all broadband services in the state, Luna said. It will take two years and cost \$1.4 million.

Syringa is also having to sue its partner ENA, Lowe said, to show that the state forced that partner to work with Qwest in a "forced marriage" in violation of its contract with Syringa.

When the state awards a contract, that triggers a five-day appeal period in which a bidder can protest the award or the process.

Syringa did not file an appeal because it had won that contract, at least in part. After the protest period ended, Lowe says, the state revised the IEN strategic plan, effectively scratching Syringa's name out.

The Statesman obtained a draft of the 20-plus-page plan circulated Feb. 3, 2009, - one week after the appeal period ended - that specifically mentions Syringa eight times. A draft circulated two days later does not reference Syringa at all.

"We ceased to exist within that document. Prior to that we had the lion's share in the early drafts of the core network and then after the protest period there is nothing, zero, not even a mention," Lowe said.

Syringa's partner remained in the state's plan.

According to several e-mails between the partner company and Syringa, Education Network of America officials had requested multiple times that the state get quotes from local service providers to determine which one could provide the best service at the best cost.

"To date, the State has rejected those requests. (T)he State has made it impossible for us to use Syringa (or anyone other than Qwest for that matter)," the company's Bob Collie wrote to Lowe in July.

"The sad part is the state could be saving millions of dollars" by utilizing some of Syringa's existing 2,000-mile fiber-optic network in the IEN, Lowe said. "They are passing up opportunities right now to save a lot of money."

Additionally, the state may have to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to defend its decisions. The Attorney General's Office said it does not have the resources to help Gwartney and his office fend off the lawsuit, so the Department of Administration had to contract with Boise law firm Hawley Troxell Ennis and Hawley at \$250 an hour - more than four times the \$57 an hour it costs to use state attorneys.

Unlike the state, Syringa has money to devote to the fight, having fared well during the recession and seen revenue grow 15 percent in 2009. It has more than doubled its employees in the past 18 months, from 21 to 52.

THE PROPER ROLE IN GOVERNMENT

Cameron, Kelly and other lawmakers say they are saddened to see the Idaho Education Network tainted by the lawsuit - and questions raised on whether it connects to Otter's proposed cuts.

"We were enamored with the idea and we still are. We still want to see it succeed," Cameron said. "(The IEN matter) is certainly symptomatic of a bigger problem that Mr. Gwartney has."

Cameron added: "I do not lay this blame on the governor. I do not blame him. I lay the blame at Mike Gwartney's feet."

Gov. Otter declined, via spokesman Jon Hanian, several opportunities to comment for this story.

When Otter was elected, one of his first goals was to dissolve the Department of Administration. It didn't work - for political and logistical reasons.

Now some lawmakers think Gwartney has gone from phasing out the department to building it into a kingdom.

"Rather than 'devolving' the agency as the governor initially indicated was the plan," Kelly said, "there has been a distinct, and disturbing, pattern of concentrating more and more control and responsibilities with the agency and its director."

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

WHAT IS THE EDUCATION NETWORK?

Approved by the Legislature in 2008, the Idaho Education Network is a statewide broadband network to link public schools, universities, libraries, state agencies and other locations.

The IEN is composed of two components: educational content and telecommunications services. Once implemented, the IEN will provide high-speed Internet service, two-way interactive video, streaming video courses and other benefits to all Idaho classrooms.

The Department of Administration is overseeing the IEN because it does more than simply link classrooms.

What is Syringa Networks?

Twelve rural Idaho telephone companies founded Syringa Networks in 2002 to improve telecommunication and rural broadband services in Idaho.

Syringa's current fiber-optic network covers over 2,000 miles. Last year the company expanded its high-speed fiber optic network into Utah.

The privately held company is headquartered in Boise with an additional office in Idaho Falls.

How did the Syringa/ENA bid compare with Qwest's?

Out of a possible 1,000 points, Syringa group's bid received 856 points, Qwest received 635 points and Verizon 492.

Syringa outperformed Qwest in six of seven individual categories including prior experience, management capability, financial and risk and legislative intent.

For monthly Internet service costs, Syringa's proposal of \$571,000 was 33 percent cheaper than Qwest's \$854,215.64; Verizon came in at \$821,034.

OTTER'S NEEDLESS BUDGET BLUFFING

Idaho Statesman Editorial Page
February 27, 2010

Our take: From Richert: Gov. Butch Otter now says he proposed zeroing out budgets for public TV and other agencies in order to pressure agency heads to write business plans. This is, at best, damage control.

University of Idaho Argonaut

If this is true (there's always the possibility he's just covering up a bad idea), it's a bad policy. If Otter wanted to pressure (public TV) to trim the budget, he should have done it in private.

Otter and the entire state government have a very serious task in front of them. Let's see some cooperation, not mindless bluffing.

Can't a Guy Get a Little Compassion?

Nathaniel Hoffman, Boise Weekly
February 27, 2010

Idaho Governor Butch Otter says his job isn't any fun. He says it's tough making cuts to state government and he deserves some compassion for doing it. Really. He said so to reporters this morning.

He said that's what he was hoping for when he released a scathing opinion attacking the press for criticizing some of those budget decisions last week--some compassion--all the while curiously insisting that he has a thick skin.

Here's how Boise Weekly reported the governor's comment:

"Otter doesn't want to cut," Otter said. "I would like to see some compassion. This is a tough tough position to be in and I've got to pick and I've got to choose."

Third-person Otter aside, it's hard to feel compassion for a guy who reported a net worth of between \$8.9 and \$31.7 million in 2006 and whose toughest day would probably seem quite utopic to many.

If Otter wants to know what tough is, he should ask that young man who appeared recently in a Nampa courtroom charged with stealing a bag of chicken.

Or maybe he should ask that young college student who couldn't afford the prescription the doctor ordered last month. It wasn't really optional.

Or maybe that family over on 15th Avenue who lost their home to foreclosure a few months ago.

Or that elderly Nampa woman who couldn't afford insurance for her car or to pay the citation for not having it.

I bet there are tens of thousands of Idahoans who could describe a tough day to Butch Otter.

No, can't say as there is much compassion for Butch Otter and his "tough job" here.

Cowboy up, Butch.

Budgets don't include 4-year phaseouts...

Eye On Boise

By Betsy Russell, Spokesman Review

February 26, 2010

This morning, while setting budgets for several smaller agencies for next year, JFAC got to the first of the seven agencies for which Gov. Butch Otter had proposed phasing out all state funding over the next four years, in this case, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs. The joint committee set a budget for the commission that shows an 11.2 percent cut in general funds, a 25 percent cut in staffing (one of four positions), and an overall 4.4 percent cut in total funding. The cuts were of the same type that are being applied to all state agencies in the budget-setting process, trimming benefit costs by tapping reserves, and imposing a permanent holdback of \$9,800, about 9 percent of the commission's original 2010 general-fund budget.

The governor's proposal for another \$24,600 cut to begin the four-year phase-out wasn't included in the budget bill. "We are not the policy committee to do the phase-outs," said JFAC Co-Chair Maxine Bell, R-Jerome. "You'll see the standard trending in all the budgets, but you will not see the phase-out."

The seven agencies for which Otter proposed four-year funding phase-outs in his budget proposal this year were, in addition to the Hispanic Commission: Idaho Public Television, the Idaho Human Rights Commission, the Independent Living Council, the Developmental Disabilities Council, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Council, and the Idaho Digital Learning Academy. He's since said the proposals were merely a "wake-up call" to get the agencies to find more cost savings.

Idaho budget blueprint: 8.5% cut for schools

Betsy Z. Russell The Spokesman-Review

February 25, 2010

BOISE - The Idaho Legislature's leading budget-setters laid all their cards on the table Thursday, laying out to the 20-member joint budget committee and the public the tentative plan they've worked up to balance next year's budget with far less money than Idaho had this year.

The result: Schools would see an unprecedented 8.5 percent cut in state funding; higher education funding would drop 14 percent; and Medicaid would drop 3.5 percent, for a 25.9 percent drop in state Medicaid funding over the past two years.

The biggest single piece of Idaho's state budget - funding for K-12 public schools - would fall to \$1.214 billion next year, from \$1.231 billion this year and \$1.419 billion last year. The joint committee is scheduled to set the school budget on Monday.

"I think 8.5 percent, while it's drastic, it's a lot better than it could have been," said Sen. Joyce Broadsword, R-Sagle, a member of the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee.

Senate Finance Chairman Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, said an agreement has been reached with all education stakeholders, including state Superintendent of Schools Tom Luna, on which line items to fund in the public schools budget to fit it into a target of \$1.214 billion for next year, and which to leave flexible for local school officials.

"Now obviously that doesn't stop any of you from making a motion that's either higher or lower than that 1.214 billion," Cameron told the joint committee.

The budget blueprint, which the co-chairs of JFAC, their staff, other lawmakers and stakeholders have been working on for weeks, shifts reserve funds, taps benefit reserves to fund state employee benefits, and makes deep cuts in all programs, including Medicaid and public schools. It eliminates virtually all proposals for new programs or expansions, cuts inflationary adjustments to zero, and removes all funding for Medicaid pricing increases that aren't mandated by federal guidelines.

Wherever possible, the plan taps into balances in dedicated funds from fees, grants or other revenue sources to keep state funding cuts from going deeper. At Idaho Public Television, for example, a newly obtained \$97,000 federal grant is used to offset part of a \$269,300 cut in state funding.

Legislative budget director Cathy Holland-Smith cautioned that it's "not a finished product," and said, "The environment that we're in right now we have never experienced before."

Cameron called it "a very somber budget."

Sen. Shawn Keough, R-Sandpoint, the Senate finance vice-chair, said, "It remains to be seen how we'll actually build the budget, but it's clearer where we're starting from."

She commended the decision to unveil the plan in advance of budget-setting. "I think it's reflective of the co-chairs' leadership and desire to be totally up-front and solicitous of input from everyone, as we go down together on this budget," she said. "There's a committed effort to try to work for the best given the circumstances."

Otter wants compassion from media

William L. Spence

February 25, 2010

Lewiston Morning Tribune

BOISE - Idaho Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter unveiled his inner hippie Wednesday, saying he just wants a little peace, love and happiness.

Speaking at an annual Idaho Press Club event, Otter said he "bristles" when editorial writers or reporters mischaracterize his decisions. They imply he takes personal satisfaction from cutting government, he said, when all he's trying to do is balance the budget.

"I don't have an option. Article VII, Section 11 of the Idaho Constitution says we can't spend more than we bring in," he said. "Just once instead of the headlines 'Otter cuts grade schools' or 'Otter cuts education,' I'd like to see the headline 'Otter obeys constitution.'"

Newspapers around the state have slammed Otter's proposal to phase out state support for Idaho Public Television, the Department of Parks and Recreation and various other commissions, as well as his suggestion public schools should share in the most recent midyear holdback.

They've portrayed the cuts "like something I wanted to do, that I couldn't wait for it to happen," he said. "But Otter doesn't want to cut. Because of the revenues we have and the expenses we have, I'm required to cut."

Asked what type of relationship he wants with the media, Otter said he'd "like to see some compassion. This is a tough, tough position to be in. I have to pick and choose, and when I made choices I have to live with them. It's not fun."

While the recession and declining state revenues have kept him from pursuing some of the policy initiatives he'd hoped to get to in his first term, Otter said his life experiences have prepared him to handle the situation.

Growing up in a poor family, struggling to go to college, making tough choices as a manager for the J.R. Simplot Co., prioritizing and defending those choices, making decisions in Congress - all those experiences "prepared me for this time," Otter said. "If I'd had to choose the same Cabinet for a downturn instead of a stagnant government process, I'd choose the same people."

Asked about those policy initiatives he wasn't able to get to, he mentioned the grocery tax credit and his plans to set aside \$100 million for the Opportunity Scholarship program. He also would have liked to raise more money for transportation maintenance, possibly by increasing the gas tax while lowering the sales tax, so taxpayers didn't have to pay more.

As for what he'd hoped would be the hallmark of his first term, before the recession got in the way, Otter had a one-word response: "Happiness."

He later described the governorship as "the best job I've ever had" and indicated he would announce his candidacy for a second term sometime in the next few weeks.

What he's waiting for?

"Peace," Otter said. "I didn't want to get the race involved in all the noise and activity that's going on at the Legislature. I wanted it to kind of mellow out before I announced. I think we're getting there."

Spence may be contacted at bspence@lmtribune.com or (208) 848-2274.

A Kinder, Gentler Idaho Governor?

Idaho Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter talks to reporters about the frustrations of the office.

By Sharon Fisher, 2-24-10

www.newwest.net

Idaho Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter feels misunderstood, wishes people would have more compassion for him, and if the economy would let him, he would like to make people happy.

That's the impression he wanted to leave with the Idaho Press Club during its annual breakfast with the governor this morning.

When newspapers describe budget cuts he's making, which he said are constitutionally required to maintain a balanced budget, "there's always an assignment of some personal philosophy," Otter said, who added that he "bristles" when an article assigns motivation to him without asking him why. "And then when I explain them I'm 'covering up,'" he said.

This year, with the repeated holdbacks, has been particularly tough, Otter said. "Holdbacks are never fun." Being able to give money to a program, or to tell an agency to go ahead and spend the money and it would be paid for out of a supplemental is a lot easier to deal with, he said. "I used to think it was the other way around, but I don't any more," he said, saying later, "I would like to see some compassion that this is a tough, tough position to be in, and it's not fun."

"Just once, I'd like to see a headline that says, instead of 'Otter Cuts Grade School,' 'Otter Obeys the Constitution,'" he said.

While such cuts could be avoided through an increase in revenue, Otter said there isn't the appetite in the Legislature to raise taxes. When it was pointed out that Oregon had just voted for a tax increase, those were "voters who raised taxes on the other folks, for the most part," he said. When it was pointed out that many of the suggestions on the government efficiency site he had set up involved raising taxes, "the overwhelming abundance are in favor of cutting back someplace," he said.

A number of questions related to Otter's initial plan to phase out general fund support for a number of commissions, as well as Idaho Public Television, followed by last week's revelation that it was all a psych-out to get the groups to respond to a request for a business plan, followed by Otter's own op-ed explaining his motivation and taking newspapers to task.

In retrospect, Otter said, perhaps he should have gone to the State Board of Education, which governs Idaho Public Television, and leaned on them harder to make the station, which underwent a more than 40 percent reduction in its budget last year, more responsive to calls for cuts this year. "I have to go through the chain of command," he said. "The interpretation and urgency I put on it wasn't shared as greatly by the state board as I had hoped that it would."

In fact, two years ago, Otter looked at removing Idaho Public Television from the State Board of Education, as other agencies such as the Commission for Libraries were. However, because many of the licenses and so on were in the name of the state board, the cost to change that would have been "astronomical," he said—plus education truly is a major function of the network, he said. "Where could it go and still perform one of its core missions, educating people?"

Otter also weighed in on several legislative issues, such as whether to cut the 1 percent cost of living adjustment for state retirees (he was against cutting it), a bill by Representative Steve Kren, R-Nampa, gutting the emissions control bill (he's against most aspects of it and has told Kren so), the grocery tax credit ("I think it's important to folks that we keep that promise"), public school budgets ("If I were in the legislature, I would try to direct most of that money to the classroom and contact with students"), and what to do with \$71 million banked for possible use by Medicaid if it turns out not to be needed (passing at least some of it back to agencies that have been cut).

If Otter is again in the position he enjoyed during the first year of his term, with budget surpluses, he'd like to go back to some of the programs he initiated there, such as \$100 million toward opportunity scholarships, an expansion of the grocery tax credit, and perhaps raising more money for transportation by lowering the sales tax and increasing the gas tax. "'Happiness' would be a good start," he said.

Otter also talked about his re-election campaign, which he has not yet formally announced though it is taken to be a foregone conclusion. He said he had hoped to wait until the legislative session settled down before he announced, so it wouldn't be a distraction. However, the filing period starts on March 8, and the legislative session now looks like it's going to go into April, he said.

Idaho Press Club Headliners Breakfast, Boise, Idaho

Guest: Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter

February 24, 2010

Transcript of portions dealing with Idaho Public Television

Reporter Sharon Fisher: Governor, given the sort of public support that public television and the smaller commissions received and the fact that some of them have said that they didn't realize that what you were asking for from them was a business plan, if you were faced with a similar situation in the future, how might you handle it differently?

Governor Otter: Well, I think I probably would go to the State Board and insist that the State Board follow-up on their request for a business plan which they had requested and had not received for some time. But as I've explained before those folks don't answer to me, pardon me, the State Board does but the folks at Idaho Public Television don't answer to me. They answer to their board and that happens to be the State Board of Education. You know we toyed with the idea two years ago when we were reforming the mission of the board, we toyed with the idea of taking that out of the State Board of Education and putting it under a different model for management. I'm not going to say which agency, but, or even a standalone, we even, like we did with the libraries and like we did with the other operations. But we found that they had if I recall 28 licenses that were licensed to them and the State Board was the holder of the licenses. The legal costs in doing that was astronomical. And so, plus the sites, all the leased sites that they had, everything that they had actually went through the State Board. So I suspect in answer to your question that, I'm getting, by the way, I'm getting the results that I asked for and I suspect that if I had gone to the State Board and been more insistent that they go forward with their request for a business plan from Idaho Public Television we probably could have achieved the same thing as we are now achieving. However, as you know the State Board is not in town all the time. They are not here, we are here all the time and the frustration in not getting a response. And if there was a misunderstanding in it, as you, and that's, you know, that's possible because you got to go through the chain of command when you do that. And the interpretation that and the urgency that I put on it maybe wasn't shared as greatly by the State Board who, as I had hoped that it would. But we found the other thing in some of those other agencies that are run by boards and commissions rather than answer to the executive department. I appoint the commissions and I appoint the boards but they are part-time boards and they are necessarily scattered all over Idaho if not only for regional but also for being able to respond to constituencies and that sort of thing. So I have found that we are getting the response from each and every quarter that we had expected. In some cases there were, the reason the communication was not as successful as I thought it should be was because there was some replacement of the executive director in the process. And it was unfortunate that it came at that time and the paperwork was lost: the request for budget, the request for budget reduction, and the request for business plan on what are you going to cut back and how is this going to affect your mission, those sort of things that they could tell us.

Reporter: So Governor, it sounds like you are getting the response that you want, ... Idaho Public Television...

Governor Otter: Well you know I, one of the bills that I do have going forward in the Legislature is to encourage more volunteer funding of Idaho Public Television and those other agencies. In other words, it gives a little larger tax break, it doubles the giving possibilities that can be deducted from income. In fact it, in one case, it goes much larger than that. So, you know, I'm hoping I can encourage an increased volunteer contribution to Idaho Public Television and their mission.

Reporter: A two part question, again on IPTV, sorry, if you, is it your view that Idaho would be better served and that you could be a more effective governor if that agency and perhaps others reported directly to you as governor and not through these part-time boards you are talking about. And secondly, if that were the case, would Peter Morrill still have a job?

Governor Otter: Well, I'm not going to venture a guess on the second part of your question, but on the first part of your question I think the Idaho Public Television was created, grew up, in the concept in the education field because it was an aide to distributive education. And there is nothing wrong with that, which was another reason aside from the fact that the extravagant legal cost in changing all of those licenses would have cost. But that was the other thing, where could it go and still perform one of its core missions and that is distributing, educating people. Obviously they do a tremendous job of that and informing people on what is going on in the Legislature and you know other specific items that they might choose to develop and explore.

Representative Tom Trail Legislative Newsletter

From Tom Trails...legislative update...

"2. Idaho Public TV -- I've probably received more mail on this issue than any other. My understanding from JFAC is that IPTV will take a cut in the budget but not more than other agencies, and that any long term plan by the Governor to eliminate state funding entirely is on hold. The Governor apparently didn't consider that if all state funding was eliminated that the State would have to pay back the Federal Government for federal funds that were used for equipment to modernize the IPTV system."

From local Moscow, Idaho List Serve –

February 23, 2010

Things you need to know If Governor Otter is successful in cutting IPTV resulting in more job layoffs on Sesame Street:

- 1) Be on the look out for Count Von Count going on a blood sucking rampage.
 - 2) If you see Elmo, remember, he probably isn't in the mood to be tickled.
 - 3) Don't Look Big Bird directly in the eyes.
 - 4) If you see Oscar the Grouch in a trash can, it probably is now his real home.
 - 5) Cookie Monster is panhandling only for cookies.
 - 6) Mr. Hooper's Store will be having an going out of business sale on March 14th.
 - 7) The name of the monster at the end of "The Monster at the End of This Book" has been changed to "Butch the Butcher".
 - 8) The Big Bad Wolf will now be renamed The Big Bad Otter.
 - 9) In order to survive, Abigail "Abby" Cadabby, will have to turn to different tricks and change her name to Dabby DeAbby.
 - 10) Watch out for Snuffy's nose! it isn't imaginary.
-

University of Idaho newspaper rips Otter's 'mindless bluffing'

Idaho Statesman

By Kevin Richert on Tue, 02/23/2010 - 8:37am.

Three days after issuing a guest opinion ripping several Idaho columnists, Gov. Butch Otter was schooled Monday.

By the editorial board of the University of Idaho Argonaut.

The campus paper criticized Otter for threatening to zero out funding for Idaho Public Television — in what he now calls a tactic designed to force Public Television to produce a business plan.

"Otter and the entire state government have a very serious task in front of them," the Argonaut says in its editorial. "Let's see some cooperation, not mindless bluffing."

More reading, and audio: Here's a link to my column last week on Otter's budgeting strategy, with audio from the governor's meeting with the Statesman editorial board.

Our view: Otter's methods juvenile

Written by Jeffrey Reznicek for the Editorial Board
The Agronaut, University of Idaho
Monday, 22 February 2010

Governor's plan to motivate cuts was just bad politics

Idaho Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter needs a lesson in politics. With the state facing a budgetary deficit, Otter has been trimming the state budget to weather this crisis. Every corner of the state government — including the University of Idaho — has felt the pinch.

Several weeks ago, in a rather rash move, the governor proposed cutting off all state money to Idaho Public Television.

IPTV operates four public television stations around Idaho, including UI's KUID. Otter's plan called for the state funding to be phased out over four years, but the public outcry over this proposal has forced the governor to rethink his decision.

In a recent guest editorial distributed to Idaho media, Otter admitted he never actually planned on cutting IPTV's funding. Apparently, he asked every agency to find ways to cut spending, and when IPTV told him there was no wiggle room in their budget, he made the threat to light a fire under them.

If this is true (there's always the possibility he's just covering up a bad idea), it's a bad policy. If Otter wanted to pressure IPTV to trim the budget, he should have done it in private. When the governor uses the press to pressure state agencies, it looks like the state is run by a headless group of bureaucrats who use the press to tattle to the people about each other.

Otter and the entire state government have a very serious task in front of them. Let's see some cooperation, not mindless bluffing.

Send letters to arg-opinion@uidaho.edu.

The Mountain Goat Report

February 20, 2010

<http://mountaingoatreport.typepad.com/>

Governor Otter, Stubborn Facts and Petard Hoisting

Yesterday Idaho Governor Butch Otter released a scathing opinion accusing the press of a lack of civility and glossing over the facts when reporting on his proposed budget cuts this year. Quoting John Adams saying "facts are stubborn things," the opinion disputes claims that he wanted to cut funding for public schools and shut down seven state agencies.

But Governor Otter is trying to have it both ways.

In January, in an election year and facing "breathtaking" budget shortfalls, Otter attempted to veer back to his libertarian, government-shaking roots by proposing weaning some agencies off government funding. When those agencies turned out to be popular and his ideas widely criticized, even by traditionally very conservative editorial boards, he now says he really didn't mean it.

Otter's recently penned opinion lambastes media criticism of his budget plans, essentially claiming that he had no choice but to propose cutting public education budgets and denying that it was his intention to "shut down State parks and the Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Public Television, the Idaho Human Rights Commission, the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the State Independent Living Council."

He says that zeroing out these agency budgets over four years was an "effort to nudge those agencies toward the greater efficiency we need, or give them the chance to find alternative funding methods."

He continues:

It was not an artful process. That's a fair criticism. However, I did not propose closing any parks or eliminating any agencies. I did not propose "a batch of half-baked plans to zero out small but politically popular state services." [Idaho Statesman] I did not ignore "hidden costs." [Spokesman-Review] My approach was not, "If it brings joy to people, government has no business doing it." [Boise Weekly] And I am not trying "to run parks or public TV on the cheap." [Idaho Statesman]

Facts are stubborn things.

The governor would like to believe that criticism of his budget plan, including eliminating general fund revenue for popular state agencies, is unfounded but what did the governor expect people to believe when he said in his 2010 State of the State and Budget Address that his proposals for "sweeping changes" in State government were "meant to be permanent?"

Here is what he said then:

With that in mind, let me say again that the budget recommendations I bring you today are based on the fact that it is not State government's money. It is the people's money.

As a result, these recommendations are responsibly conservative.

They were developed with great care, deliberation and a full understanding of their consequences – real and perceived.

And they provide for a balanced budget, as our Idaho Constitution so wisely requires.

My recommendations include some sweeping changes to the way we do business in State government.

Those changes are meant to be permanent – based on a philosophy of government that recognizes our responsibility to individual Idahoans rather than to government itself.

I believe they represent what can and must be achieved within the realities we face, and to more closely align our government with its properly limited role.

He didn't say anything about "nudging" state agencies toward efficiencies as he now claims was his intention.

No. In fact he made his intentions quite clear.

There Otter is saying that some functions of current state government don't fit within his limited-government philosophy and should be realigned. Although he didn't explicitly state what agencies he believes fall outside that philosophy, he made it perfectly clear in his budget proposal—by phasing out their general fund revenue.

And he said that the decision to do so was “developed with great care, deliberation and a full understanding of their consequences.” Only after being widely criticized for that decision does he concede that it was “not an artful process.”

Facts are stubborn things.

Here is what the governor wrote in his fiscal year 2011 budget highlights:

The Governor’s recommendation fully integrates several legislative priorities that his office plans to advance during the 2010 legislative session, including the beginning of a four-year phase out of General Fund support for:

- * Human Rights Commission
- * State Independent Living Council
- * Developmental Disabilities Council
- * Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission
- * Hispanic Commission
- * Idaho Public Television

The Governor’s recommendation includes the elimination of the Department of Parks and Recreation, with park maintenance being transferred to the Department of Lands and the fees portion being transferred to the Department of Fish and Game. The combination will result in fiscal year savings of \$10 million with ongoing savings of \$7 million annual. The goal is to ensure the continued operation of Idaho parks for residence [sic] and visitors.

Governor Otter can state that he “did not propose ... eliminating any agencies” but it wouldn’t be true. He did-- explicitly when he recommended eliminating Parks and Rec and implicitly when he said those other six agencies weren’t worthy of taxpayer funding by eliminating general fund support for them.

Governor Otter can be the ax-wielding, limited government budget cutter or he can be the amiable, efficiency seeking budget nudger. He can’t be both.

Governor Otter can criticize the critics but facts are stubborn things and his criticism embarrassingly epitomizes “hoist with his own petard.”

Cheers and Jeers

Idaho Falls Post Register
Friday, February 19, 2010

Jeers to Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter, whose proposed budget appears to have been founded on the Mafioso principle of mess with me and pay the price. Senate President Pro Tem Robert Geddes, a Soda Springs Republican, revealed this week that Otter’s proposal to phase out several state agencies was less about determining the proper role of government than hammering the bearers of bad news.

“Those agencies and departments who chose to kind of thumb their nose at the governor found that they didn’t have a place in the budget,” Geddes said.

In September, Otter asked agencies to look for reductions. Heaven help you if the governor didn’t like what he heard. “The budget was a wake-up call for them to get on board,” Otter’s budget director, Wayne Hammon, told the Idaho Statesman. “And with the exception of public television, all of them responded very favorably.”

IPTV General Manager Peter Morrill told Otter that further budget cuts would adversely impact viewers. IPTV lost nearly 50 percent of its state funds in the last year.

Strangely, Otter backed off his zeroing out plan this week. The governor told the Idaho Statesman's editorial board that he wasn't serious about defunding the agencies.

"I wanted the (agency heads) to think that," Otter said. "How else am I going to get them to respond?"

Talk about mixed messages. Perhaps the public outcry over Otter's phase-out of public television and other agencies has the governor in damage control mode. Or maybe one hand in the governor's office doesn't know what the other one is up to.

Lewiston Tribune Editorial Board

2/19/10

JEERS ... to Gov. Otter. Tell this governor what he doesn't want to hear and he'll retaliate.

Case in point: Idaho Public Television.

Otter wants to wean public television from about \$1.7 million in state tax support over the next four years. It means the end of statewide public television. And why is this being done?

To get Idaho Public Television General Manager Peter Morrill's attention.

"Those agencies and departments who chose to kind of thumb their nose at the governor found that they didn't find a place in his budget," Senate President Bob Geddes, R-Soda Springs, told the Idaho Press Club Tuesday.

Last fall, as the state revenues were tanking, Otter's budget shop asked public agencies what they could cut. Among those who failed to respond suitably were those that ended up on the chopping block - Parks and Recreation, the Human Rights Commission and public television. And it was Morrill, according to Otter's shop, who was most recalcitrant.

"We had one agency tell us, 'There ain't nothing we can do. We need every single dollar,' " said Wayne Hammon, Otter's budget chief.

Morrill didn't thumb his nose at that request. He answered truthfully. After losing 50 percent of his budget the year before, Morrill wasn't sure where else to go.

"With budget cuts last fiscal year and in the FY10 base, we can make no further reductions in costs without significant reduction in service and the ability to respond to our constituents," Morrill wrote on Sept. 18. Otter cut public television anyway - \$124,500 or 7.5 percent - last October, which cost two people their jobs. Then in January, the governor announced plans to slice \$550,000 next year and keep going until the network had no state support four years from now.

Wednesday, Otter told the Idaho Statesman's editorial board: "I wanted them to think that (they would be zero funded). I wanted them to think that. How else am I going to get them to respond?"

Now that will show Morrill who's boss.

C.L. "Butch" Otter, Governor
OPINION
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 19, 2010
10:014

CONTACT: Jon Hanian
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FACTS CAN BE STUBBORN – BUT THEY'RE NECESSARY

By Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter

In December 1770, while arguing for the acquittal of British soldiers charged with killing his fellow Americans in the Boston Massacre, John Adams said, "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."

There was a time when most newspaper columnists at least paid lip service to the good intentions of public officials. They might be misguided, shortsighted or simply stupid, the writers would suggest, but at least they meant well. Social niceties were observed; there was a higher level of mutual respect and civility.

That just isn't the case anymore. Too many writers now ignore, gloss over or leave out facts they find at odds with their conclusion or the point they're trying to make. Facts after all, as Adams said, can be stubborn things – and inconvenient.

As Governor, I expect to take my share of flak. It's more than fair to criticize and even blast me. You don't spend as long as I have in public life, or in business for that matter, without developing a pretty thick skin. But while I'm grateful to live in a country where the Constitution protects our right to freely express our opinions, I still am disappointed when some portray their opinions as facts.

Let me cite a couple of recent cases in point, without either crediting or condemning the offending parties:

The Claim: Otter wants to cut funding for public schools.

The Fact: Faced with revenue shortfalls, a constitutional requirement for a balanced budget, the fact that public schools make up a big share of the State budget, and the political reality that nobody wants to raise taxes – especially in an election year – I made the difficult decision that public schools would have to share the burden facing every other agency of State government and indeed every other Idaho citizen.

The Claim: Otter wants to shut down State parks and the Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Public Television, the Idaho Human Rights Commission, the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the State Independent Living Council.

The Fact: I encouraged all State agencies in September 2009 to submit proposals for saving as much taxpayer money as possible. I wanted agency directors and administrators to have the flexibility to find efficiencies and savings without doing damage to their core statutory and constitutional missions. Most came through like champions, in many cases exceeding my expectations. However, Idaho Public Television said there was no savings to be had – anywhere. Facing the deadline for submitting budget proposals, I submitted plans for moving those budgets off the taxpayer-supported General Fund over four years. It was an effort to nudge those agencies toward the greater efficiency we need, or give them the chance to find alternative funding methods; the choice was theirs. Director Nancy

Merrill of the Department of Parks and Recreation stepped up with a business plan for every park and a “can do” approach. The Human Rights Commission and Director Pam Parks – with the help of Roger Madsen at the Department of Labor – also found a way to address their budget needs, and those of Idaho taxpayers. The Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is getting administrative and support services help from the Department of Health and Welfare and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The other agencies all are working hard to find solutions.

It was not an artful process. That’s a fair criticism. However, I did not propose closing any parks or eliminating any agencies. I did not propose “a batch of half-baked plans to zero out small but politically popular state services.” I did not ignore “hidden costs.” My approach was not, “If it brings joy to people, government has no business doing it.” And I am not trying “to run parks or public TV on the cheap.”

I understand that columnists are in the business of selling newspapers. I also understand that responsibility and prudent financial management are not exciting or headline-grabbing topics. However, they are at the heart of what State government must do on behalf of the people we serve.

It’s unfortunate that some columnists consider facts little more than obstacles to be overcome or side-stepped, justified in their minds by the righteous end of afflicting those who they consider “comfortable.”

But Adams was right 240 years ago. He still is.

Otter’s Scapegoating IPTV’s Morrill

Submitted by Sisyphus on Thu, 02/18/2010 - 3:44pm.

<http://www.43rdstateblues.com>

Otter’s plans for gutting Idaho’s state government found relatively easy solutions. For example the Idaho Human Rights Commission was folded into the Department of Labor at no cost. The Parks Department was saved simply because of public outcry in an election year. But one agency, Idaho Public Television, has a sticker price of \$1.5 million annually. Ironically, if Idaho doesn’t come up with it, the state may have to pay back \$4 million received from the feds for upgrades.

Trouble is, since IPTV is the only statewide broadcaster, and it religiously covers Idaho politics, it has some friends in the statehouse. So Otter’s pulling out an old political tactic, character assassination. Otter’s budget czar, Wayne Hammon, said they didn’t really wanna cut their budget after all:

Wayne Hammon, the Division of Financial Management director, now says Idaho Public Television general manager Peter Morrill’s agency was among those targeted with deep budget cuts because it failed to sufficiently respond to Otter’s request in September for how it would accomplish impending statewide holdbacks.

“I would not say they were being punished,” Hammon said. “The budget was meant as a wake-up call for them to get on board.”

Until now, Otter’s aides have said cutting Idaho Public Television’s funding was largely based on his view that taxpayer-funded public TV was outside the scope of government. That position has prompted an outcry from public TV supporters, who say the statewide network provides quality educational programming over its 42 translators to virtually all of Idaho.

Unlike Otter’s unsuccessful veto tantrum last session, he’s not going to confront legislators on an unpopular proposal. Instead he’s going to create a scapegoat so legislators can have an excuse to do his dirty work for him. The evidence for that are the accolades Merrill received just one month ago from the same budget czar who: “heaped praise on Morrill as a creative, frugal manager.” On Jan. 12, Hammon told JFAC he has “the greatest deal of respect for public television and for its director, Peter Morrill,” who he said has “been able to turn pennies into dollars.”

It makes one wonder whether lying to legislators is what Otter had in mind when desiring to run government like a business. At one time, Otter provided the same level of praise to Keith Allred who is currently running to be the Democratic candidate for governor. Expect a nasty disingenuous campaign.

Eye On Boise

By Betsy Russell
Spokesman Review
February 17, 2010

The difference a month makes?

One odd thing about the new criticism of Idaho Public Television's manager, Peter Morrill, by the governor's budget chief, Wayne Hammon, is that just a month ago Hammon heaped praise on Morrill as a creative, frugal manager. Now, Hammon is saying the governor's proposal to phase out IPTV's state funding over the next four years was a "wake-up call" in response to the agency's recalcitrance on budget-cutting (see item below); but on Jan. 12, Hammon told JFAC he has "the greatest deal of respect for public television and for its director, Peter Morrill," who he said has "been able to turn pennies into dollars."

First praise for IPTV, then slamming the agency

Idaho Statesman
By Brian Murphy
Wed, 02/17/2010 - 10:24am.

Here's an interesting sidebar to a story in Wednesday's Idaho Statesman.

First, the story — Otter's budget hit balky agencies

Gov. Butch Otter's budget director Wayne Hammon calls out Idaho Public Television for its unwillingness to sacrifice in the face of severe budget cuts.

"The budget was meant as a wake-up call for them to get on board," Hammon said of budget cuts to five commissions and councils, IPTV and the Department of Parks and Recreation. "And with the exception of public television, all of them responded very favorably."

And now the sidebar: Courtesy of Spokesman-Review veteran legislative reporter Betsy Russell and her Eye on Boise blog. Seems that during his testimony to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee last month, Hammon praised Idaho Public Television general manager Peter Morrill.

Gov. Butch Otter's budget hit balky agencies

All except IPTV have since gotten the message clearly, says the state budget chief.
BY BRIAN MURPHY - bmurphy@idahostatesman.com
Copyright: © 2010 Idaho Statesman
Published: 02/17/10

In September, Gov. Butch Otter asked state agencies receiving general fund money to look for possible reductions to help with the state's budget shortfall.

Agencies and commissions that did not respond to his satisfaction got their answer when Otter proposed a fiscal 2011 budget to the Legislature last month.

“Those agencies and departments who chose to kind of thumb their nose at the governor found that they didn’t find a place in his budget,” said Senate President Pro Tem Bob Geddes, R-Soda Springs.

Otter’s budget proposed ending general fund spending for the Department of Parks and Recreation. He also proposed a four-year phase-out of funding for Idaho Public Television and five smaller commissions and councils - Human Rights, Hispanic Affairs, Independent Living, Developmental Disabilities, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

“The budget was meant as a wake-up call for them to get on board,” budget director Wayne Hammon said Tuesday. “And with the exception of public television, all of them responded very favorably.”

Hammon commended the parks department, the Human Rights and Hispanic commissions and the Independent Living Council for quick work in responding to proposed budget cuts.

The parks department unveiled a business plan to save \$4.5 million. The Human Rights Commission is working with the Department of Labor to incorporate and save money. The Hispanic Commission is looking at expanding its mission to attract additional federal dollars.

But he criticized Idaho Public Television, which has generated enormous sympathy and e-mails from the public, for its response to a Sept. 10 call for “possible reductions to help resolve a recently projected \$151 million state budget shortfall.”

“We had one agency tell us, ‘There ain’t nothing we can do. We need every single dollar,’” Hammon said.

In a letter dated Sept. 18, Peter Morrill, the general manager of Idaho Public Television, wrote in response to Otter’s Sept. 10 request: “We regret that we are unable to voluntarily reduce our general fund appropriation without significantly impacting the viewers we serve.”

Other agencies exceeded Hammon’s expectations. Idaho’s public universities, for example, outlined plans for 4-, 6- and 8-percent cuts.

Morrill said the State Board of Education, which has oversight responsibility for IPTV, signed off on his letter. Morrill said he did not think the Sept. 10 letter from the Division of Financial Management was a call for specific percentage cuts. In his response, Morrill outlined his agency’s duties and expenses, pointing out that IPTV had already taken a 49 percent cut in funding from the 2009 budget to 2010.

“I never read that to say we would voluntarily lay off longstanding state employees,” Morrill said. “If we erred in that interpretation, then I’m truly sorry.”

He said he did not hear from the governor’s office about the letter until a Dec. 23 hearing informing him of the four-year phase-out.

“The governor has never said to me the thinking behind (the phaseout), but we have to respect the difficult times the state faces,” Morrill said.

IPTV turned in a 42-page business plan to the State Board of Education on Feb. 11, putting forth three scenarios to deal with cuts.

“The business plan they developed does not advance the ball,” said Hammon, who added that he does not believe IPTV should be getting general fund dollars.

Otter's spokesman said the budget proposal was not intended as retribution, but fit with Otter's desire to return state government to its proper role.

"Nothing we've done is being punitive or punishing to anyone," Jon Hanian said. "There's no carrot-and-stick approach here."

Hammon said the agencies targeted were not the only ones being uncooperative, but that they had the most easily identifiable solutions to budget cuts. Hammon said Otter does not have direct control over commissions and councils, so their general fund budgets were one of the few avenues open to him to reshape state government.

"The governor is using all the tools he has available, including his authority of the executive budget, to manage a very big, nonhomogeneous administration," Hammon said. "All those things we wanted to do, they have now made it their own and solved these problems. Did it work? I believe it has in every case - except for public television."

Otter backs expansion of income tax credit

By Ben Botkin - Times-News writer

Posted: Wednesday, February 17, 2010 10:00 am

BOISE — Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter is backing an expansion of an existing income tax credit that would give a bigger break to residents who donate to some state agencies, the governor's budget chief told the Times-News on Tuesday.

The proposed legislation, which the governor's office is crafting with lawmakers, has not yet been publicly introduced. Its overall purpose is to help agencies that have traditionally relied strongly on general-fund dollars and are facing cuts.

First, it would increase the income tax credit that residents can receive for donations. Second, it would add five state agencies to the existing list of entities that residents can receive a tax credit for donating to.

"This bill would make it an even better tax credit and expand it," said Wayne Hammon, Otter's budget chief.

The five agencies added would be: the Idaho Commission of Hispanic Affairs, Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities, Idaho State Independent Living Council, and Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Otter has recommended gradually reducing state funding for those agencies and Idaho Public Television over a four-year period. Hammon said the proposal will help wean the agencies off state dollars.

The tax credit currently covers half of donations made to public and nonprofit private schools and universities, IPTV, the Idaho State Historical Society, and libraries and museums.

The credit is limited to \$100 for a single filer or \$200 for a couple. The proposal would increase that to \$500 and \$1,000, respectively. It is also capped at 20 percent of taxes owed, which the proposal would increase to 50 percent.

Sen. Brent Hill, R-Rexburg, a co-sponsor of the legislation with House Majority Leader Mike Moyle, said the bill will be a good way to get residents involved in support of schools, IPTV and other agencies.

Because the credit covers half of donations, the state's return on its investment doubles, Hill said. For example, if a resident gets a \$500 tax credit, it's because they donated \$1,000.

"You're doubling your money," Hill said.

The proposal estimates a reduction in tax receipts of \$5 million for the next fiscal year, but an overall increase of \$10 million to organizations that receive donations.

The proposal would also increase the credit limit for corporate giving from \$1,000 to \$5,000, and includes a five-year sunset clause.

Letters to the Editor

- Idaho Statesman

Published: 02/16/10

PUBLIC TELEVISION

Preserve this valuable asset

Our concerns are cuts in state funding. Do people know that the entire budget for Idaho Public Television is less than \$8 million per year? A proposed cut of \$1 million to \$2 million would cause significant problems for this valuable asset we have in Idaho.

First, it is our understanding IPTV may use state funds only for broadcast equipment. Cutting funds also cuts matching funds from the federal government, which increases the damage. IPTV has received federal grants which supplement management and maintenance of broadcast equipment. More charges would be incurred for more failure to meet those grant requirements. Fewer state residents will be able to receive broadcasts. Kids in rural areas would be denied educational programming.

Second, IPTV is our only statewide broadcast system without national affiliation. We have great freedom as we use this valuable asset. Children's shows present values that build strong characters in addition to being educational. Research has verified that kids do better in school because of early educational shows.

Why not try to keep the funding for IPTV? Let's encourage all lawmakers, including the governor and his wife, to watch and enjoy IPTV. They all might learn something.

JEAN AND FRANK STARK, Boise

Budget cuts would threaten locally produced programs

I'm a former Marine, a gun owner, an archery hunter and a taxpayer. I'm also a member and supporter of Idaho Public Television.

If the Legislature votes to remove state funding for IPTV, we're in jeopardy of losing locally produced, Emmy Award-winning programs such as "Dialogue," "Outdoor Idaho," "D4K" and "Idaho Reports." These shows provide all Idahoans access to quality news, arts, education and entertainment programming. They also document and preserve Idaho's rich and unique history.

Most of the nationally produced programs on IPTV can't be found on any other station, and none of the locally created programs on IPTV would be produced by commercial TV stations.

Additionally, do we want to lose the investment of the upgrade to digital television, which now televises statewide on four different stations?

There's a Bruce Springsteen song in which he laments that there are "57 channels and nothin' on." Now we have 357 channels and nothing on. Moreover, many Idahoans can't afford cable television, especially in these trying economic times. IPTV is one station I know will always have something on worth watching that's affordable to every Idahoan.

I want some of my tax money to continue to go to this worthy, important institution.

BRYAN DUFOSSÉ, Boise

Rural Idahoans deserve access to quality programs

While it doesn't surprise me in the least to hear that Butch Otter does not watch public television, I think he needs to be aware of the importance of IPTV to a great many Idahoans.

Anyone who cannot afford cable is not going to find anything remotely intellectually stimulating anywhere else, certainly not on network channels. Maybe it works for Butch and his family, but I cannot imagine sitting and watching "The Bachelor" or "The Biggest Loser" when I sit down to relax.

Some of us would like to be able to relax in the evening and still be able to have our minds challenged.

Since I live in Boise, this funding cut would not directly affect me, but really, don't you think rural Idahoans deserve better?

CONNIE GROVER, Boise

For the sake of our kids, save the talking dog

Did you know that Idaho Public TV has a talking dog? It's likely that your kids do. The show is called "Martha Speaks." After eating alphabet soup, she can magically talk. It is one of the many programs aired by Idaho Public Television. The high quality of the programming is undeniable.

I grew up in eastern Idaho, in a rural community near Driggs. We could receive only a few channels, but IPTV was one of them and we regularly watched it. I have a long history with IPTV and very precious memories; I want to see that legacy remain for Idaho's children and rural-area viewers.

Although I'm a regular viewer and I cringe when I hear the word "Festival," I support continued public funding of IPTV. I must counter the governor's recommendation and urge the Legislature to continue to fund IPTV. In fact, I prefer that public funds continue to be spent on IPTV on behalf of the children of the state of Idaho. This programming is a positive force for all our children.

A few daily moments of a talking dog is likely to have a lasting impact on our children's development and well-being.

JOHN WADDELL, Boise

Let's reduce our air fleet to keep public TV on the air

It's obvious our governor has not watched much on IPTV or he wouldn't have made the comment that the age of cable TV and ubiquitous Internet has eliminated the need for a state-funded public TV system. How can he possibly compare cable TV shows like "Sex in the City," "Festival of Poker" and "Real Housewives of Orange County" with educational programs like "NOVA," "Frontline," and "GlobeTrekker," to name only a few of IPTV's programs.

Then you need to think about all the children's educational programming as well as IPTV's statewide resource programs like "Outdoor Idaho" and the Idaho state Legislature.

The governor asked for suggestions as to what he should cut if not IPTV. Maybe the cost of using, maintaining and storing three state airplanes is a start.

The last we heard about one of the planes was when Gov. Otter used one to transport himself and the media to Stanley for a photo op of salmon being released at Redfish last fall. It was an interesting story, but hey, it's a beautiful drive. Save IPTV.

ERIC ALLEN, Boise

Tune in; inform yourself

Recently I read an editorial by Wayne Hoffman in the Idaho Press-Tribune stating that Idaho Public Television should have no public funding. I challenge that statement.

At IPTV's inception in the '60s there were few antennas, only commercial TV stations, and they had little intellectually stimulating content. There are still stations that can be plucked from the air without requiring monthly cable or satellite fees.

Hoffman stated that if the state was supplying the station, it maybe should supply the TV set also. What an illogical thought that is.

We are supplied with roads around the state but I don't think it will ever be our state's requisite to supply the cars to drive on them.

I question whether he watched any commercial TV obtained only by antenna lately. Most is pure drivel, crude or sensationalistic.

If I had young children I would cringe to have them watch TV without supervision. Also commercial TV news programs are only 15-45 second soundbites without depth.

People may disagree with the content on IPTV but if you watch it you may have enough information to make an informed opinion. Isn't that what you want a voting public to have?

RICHARD ROBERGE, Caldwell

Hammon: Plan to eliminate IPTV funding was meant as 'wake-up call'

Eye On Boise

February 16

Gov. Butch Otter's budget chief, Wayne Hammon, said Tuesday that the governor's plan to eliminate all state funding for Idaho Public Television over the next four years was a "wake-up call for them to get on board" with budget cuts. Until now, Otter's aides have said cutting Idaho Public Television's funding was largely based on his view that taxpayer-funded public TV was outside the scope of government, the Associated Press reported. That position has prompted an outcry from public TV supporters, who say the statewide network provides quality educational programming over its 42 translators to virtually all of Idaho. Click below to read the full story from AP reporter John Miller.

Otter wields budget knife to spur IPTV savings

JOHN MILLER, Associated Press Writer

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter proposed eliminating \$1.7 million in taxpayer funding for Idaho Public Television because its manager offered inadequate budget-cutting measures last year, the Republican chief executive's finance chief said Tuesday.

On Jan. 11, Otter announced plans to dump public TV funding by 2014, starting with a \$550,000 cut in July.

Wayne Hammon, the Division of Financial Management director, now says Idaho Public Television general manager Peter Morrill's agency was among those targeted with deep budget cuts because it failed to sufficiently respond to Otter's request in September for how it would accomplish impending statewide holdbacks.

"I would not say they were being punished," Hammon said. "The budget was meant as a wake-up call for them to get on board."

Until now, Otter's aides have said cutting Idaho Public Television's funding was largely based on his view that taxpayer-funded public TV was outside the scope of government. That position has prompted an outcry from public TV supporters, who say the statewide network provides quality educational programming over its 42 translators to virtually all of Idaho.

The new twist emerged Tuesday, when Senate President Pro Tem Bob Geddes told reporters at an Idaho Press Club forum in Boise that state agencies faced the threat of losing state funding because they hadn't cooperated with Otter as he tackled the state's biggest financial crisis in 40 years.

Other agencies on the chopping block were the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Human Rights Commission, the Hispanic Commission, the Independent Living Council, the Developmental Disabilities Council and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Council.

"Those agencies and departments who chose to kind of thumb their nose at the governor found that they didn't find a place in his budget," Geddes said.

Hammon confirmed Geddes' remarks, but said the other agencies have since largely satisfied Otter's demands. That includes the Human Rights Commission with its plan to move into the Department of Labor, and Parks and Recreation's proposal to raise fees and eliminate jobs to save \$4.5 million while still keeping 30 state parks open.

On Sept. 10, Morrill was among agency directors who received a letter from Otter's finance managers advising them of a projected \$151 million 2010 budget shortfall — and asking them to "closely analyze your current ... spending plans for possible reductions."

A week later, Morrill responded by describing how his agency's budget had been cut by nearly 50 percent since 2009 and said further budget cuts weren't possible "without significant reduction in services."

"We regret that we are unable to voluntarily reduce our general fund appropriation without significantly impacting the viewers we serve," he wrote Sept. 18.

Hammon took that for unwillingness, but Morrill, public TV's director for 15 years, contends the real culprit behind the Capitol dustup is miscommunication. Morrill says he's always complied with Otter's requests to trim spending, including laying off two employees in September to help make up for the latest \$125,000 holdback.

"We suggested with this document that the only way we could go was to lay off people," Morrill said of the letter, adding he would have been more specific if he'd known exactly what Hammon wanted.

Last week, Morrill did submit a 42-page business plan outlining how his station would operate without state funding. For instance, it would charge the Idaho Legislature for live broadcasts, which run more than \$200,000 annually.

Hammon told reporters Tuesday that Morrill's business plan was inadequate and "says again there is no room for savings."

Morrill said separately that was the first he'd heard of objections.

"I haven't gotten a call," he said.

The two sides have until March 9 to patch up differences, when the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee is due to set Idaho Public Television's budget.

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Idaho Legislature: More high-risk, low-yield budget cuts

By Kevin Richert, Editorial Page Editor

Idaho Statesman

Thu, 02/15/2010

Say this for Gov. Butch Otter's proposed budget cuts: They have motivated a who's who of former elected officials to jump back into the public discourse.

First, Cecil Andrus and John Evans, a pair of Democratic former governors, spearheaded a bipartisan push to rescue Idaho's Human Rights Commission. When a grassroots campaign sprang up to defend Idaho Public Television, organizers recruited one of Otter's fellow Republicans, former state schools superintendent Jerry Evans, to act as spokesman.

And on Thursday's Opinion page, John Evans resurfaced with a Reader's View advocating for the Developmental Disabilities Council, founded on his watch in 1978. The council's job is to help Idahoans with developmental disabilities find the public and private services they need.

"In our efforts to economize, we must not eliminate those programs that ensure citizen involvement and create transparency in government," said Evans.

As Evans notes, the council receives most of its money from the federal government. But Otter would like to phase out state general fund support over four years; he is seeking \$73,000 for the council in 2010-11, down from this year's \$101,400.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: Otter is squandering a lot of political capital by trying to zero out small agencies, moves that do next to nothing to fix Idaho's fiscal crisis. The amount Otter hopes to save on this council would scarcely pay for a few overpriced groundbreaking. And it's nothing compared to the \$14.3 million general fund cut Otter has recommended for public schools.

But when the executive branch talks about zeroing out an agency, there's a political risk, because the advocates come to the forefront. A longtime politician, Otter has made some high-risk, low-yield recommendations.

State considers new funding formula for IPTV, Dialing back dollars

Twin Falls Times News

February 14, 2010

By Ben Botkin - Times-News writer

BOISE — Idaho Public Television is at a crossroads.

Across its intersection is the present system, in which IPTV offers a service that covers virtually all of Idaho.

But a sharp turn may be in store for IPTV, in which it is weaned entirely off state funding, and relies upon private contributions.

What happens next depends on the Legislature and how it balances the state's budget with Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's recommendation to gradually strip away IPTV's state funding during the next four years.

For public television, home of popular programs such as "Sesame Street," "Masterpiece Theatre" and "Antiques Roadshow," the change would mark a fundamental shift away from state support that helps broadcast programming to sparsely populated areas.

The proposal would take away one-fourth of IPTV's \$1.6 million in state funding — \$400,000 — each year until it's gone. That money would go to the state's education budget instead.

The loss of state funding would remove about 24 percent of IPTV's \$7 million budget. The rest of IPTV's money comes from a Corporation for Public Broadcasting grant and private contributions.

"The state's investment is modest but that modest part is a really key piece," said Peter Morrill, general manager of IPTV.

State funding pays for the administration and maintenance of IPTV's statewide broadcast system, while private donations help pay for programming and production.

About \$3 million of the budget comes from private contributions, which means IPTV would have to increase donations received by more than 50 percent within four years to fill a \$1.6 million hole.

Jon Hanian, Otter's spokesman, said the proposal reflects the governor's belief in user pay.

"That means if you use or enjoy a service — whether that means driving on a state road, enjoying a state park, or watching a taxpayer-funded television program to some degree or another — the user of that service should be willing to bear some part of the cost associated with providing that service," Hanian said. "This is what we are doing."

Regional impact

In south-central Idaho, the proposal means IPTV would have to monitor donations from the region to see if they match what's needed to maintain the transmitter that serves most of the Magic Valley.

IPTV has five transmitters serving the population hubs in the state: Coeur d'Alene, Moscow, the Treasure Valley, the Idaho Falls region and the Magic Valley. A system of 42 smaller translators sends the signal through rural areas, including Hagerman, Burley and Glenns Ferry.

"If this is passed and we are set on this course, we believe we can commit to keeping all five main transmitters up and operational for at least two years," Morrill said. "As we get into the second year we will do cost analysis."

Pledges will need to cover electrical equipment, a prorated portion of programming costs, and maintenance staff costs.

Changes could put programs such as "Outdoor Idaho" and "Idaho Reports" at risk, or pare them back extensively. There also would be less money for British comedies, dramas and musical shows that supplement IPTV's lineup.

"Based on our initial calculations, we think there is sufficient base population in the Treasure Valley, eastern Idaho, Coeur d'Alene-Spokane," Morrill said. "We are less confident about Twin Falls and Moscow."

The biggest concern is Moscow, because the size of its transmitter requires more electricity. Moscow is followed by Twin Falls, though. IPTV will look at the ZIP codes of contributions to see if each region's donations are supporting its transmitter.

As for the system of repeaters, the technology that sends signals into rural areas, IPTV will have to stop servicing them if the plan goes forward.

"We do not see a business model for maintaining in a cost-effective manner the vast majority of those," Morrill said. As a result, service to those regions would end once the translators break down, providing an uncertain date for when viewers can expect their screens to go dark.

"It could be tomorrow," Morrill said of that scenario. "It could be two months from now. They will just stop operating."

Fundraising challenges

Fundraising, already a regular event for IPTV, isn't expected to increase enough to fill a \$1.6 million hole.

In the world of public television, about 10 to 15 percent of market households tend to donate. IPTV receives donations from more than 15 percent, already outperforming its peers, Morrill said.

"We do not see any substantial new sources of funds sitting out there that we have not already explored," he said. "We're not seeing the potential there. ... Now are we going to see small increases? That's possible, but not to this type of degree."

The station can't charge for its signals, air commercials or gather fees for airing infomercials.

"The box that we live in is extremely limited," Morrill said. "We're a public service. We can't be anything other than a public service."

At the same time, foundation giving on a national level is decreasing. IPTV expects a drop in support from foundations that help pay for programming and production.

Boise resident Jim Paxton, also the owner of Snake River Pool & Spa in Twin Falls, sits on the Board of Directors for Friends of Idaho Public Television. If IPTV loses state funding, he said, it also loses its ability to operate statewide. Using their money - not tax dollars - the board's members have sent letters to IPTV viewers to raise awareness. There's also a Web site to boost awareness about the issue.

"It reaches all facets of age groups from the young children watching 'Sesame Street' to 'Antiques Roadshow,'" Paxton said, adding that he appreciates lawmakers and the governor listening to their concerns.

Tuned in to tight cuts

Cuts aren't new to IPTV, which saw state funding slashed from \$3.2 million in 2009 to \$1.6 million this year. When Otter's office sent out a request in September for agencies to review general funds for possible reductions, IPTV management said it couldn't happen without a major impact.

"With budget cuts last fiscal year and in the FY10 base, we can make no further reductions in costs without significant reduction in services and the ability to respond to our constituents," Morrill wrote in a Sept. 18, 2009, memo to the State Board of Education. "We regret that we are unable to voluntarily reduce our General Fund appropriation without significantly impacting the viewers we serve."

Later that month, as part of a holdback proposal across state agencies, IPTV's share was 7.5 percent, or \$124,500. As a result, IPTV laid off two employees, froze a third open position, and added a fifth furlough day for its employees.

Morrill said no suggestions were given at the time because cuts couldn't be made without layoffs.

Sen. Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, and co-chairman of the Joint Finance Appropriations Committee, said IPTV has to be part of the cuts after a decline in revenues.

"They will see a reduction like everybody else," he said. But he added that JFAC's role is to set the next year's budget, not pass a plan for IPTV's funding for the next three years, like what is outlined in Otter's four-year plan. Any move to end all state funding would be a policy decision not made in JFAC, he said.

Rep. Wendy Jaquet, D-Ketchum, said rather than cut all state funding in four years, she said the best thing is to cut a percentage of IPTV's budget that mirrors what other state agencies will face. She's also encouraging her constituents to donate more to IPTV.

Sen. Bert Brackett, R-Rogerson, said IPTV funding has to be balanced with crucial budget needs facing the state, ranging from education to corrections.

At the same time, he said, it's important to maintain some level of general-fund support for IPTV to help preserve legislative oversight of the agency.

IPTV would also need to pay back the federal government for grants used on equipment no longer in use.

"We are estimating we will have to pay back the federal government \$1 (million) to \$2 million worth of funds because when they give you money you guarantee to operate it and maintain it according to the original grant," Morrill said. "We would have to go through 10 years worth of grants to notify all those federal agencies that the equipment they helped pay for isn't being maintained anymore."

Clicking off state support

In the debate, Oregon Public Broadcasting has been praised as a system that does well without a strong reliance on state dollars.

"Oregon Public Broadcasting broadcasts in a neighboring state that is practicing some of what the governor has suggested in Idaho," Hanian said. "Each state is different, and we are not suggesting OPB be used as the sole model IPTV should follow. We are not trying to dictate what model they follow. However the governor has made it clear that there are public television operations that have already eased their burden on state general fund expenditures."

However, IPTV officials and station managers from other Western states say Oregon's larger population gives OPB an advantage. Oregon has about 3.7 million people, while Idaho has roughly 1.5 million.

Becky Chinn, communications director of OPB, said the state's population helps fundraising efforts rural communities can't cover on their own.

In 2002, OPB lost its state funding, which was about 10 percent of its budget. Staff was cut along with a Friday night public-affairs program. At the same time, OPB took steps to inform the public about the funding loss. Now OPB gets only \$62,500 from the state.

"We built a lot of awareness with our audience about the fact that the funding is gone," Chinn said.

Small-state squeeze

Other states with smaller populations depend more upon state funding. Wyoming Public Broadcasting Service, for example, gets about 45 percent of its budget from the state.

The Wyoming Legislature in 2009 reduced state funding by 10 percent, or nearly \$200,000, said Bob Connelly, assistant general manager for WPBS. That cut is expected to stay in place and be spread out the next two years.

"It's absolutely critical," Connelly said of state funding. "We could not survive as a station and as a system without it."

Connelly noted that Wyoming's broadcast system is similar to Idaho's.

The rate of return, or the percentage of viewers donating to public television, must be factored with the population, Connelly said. For example, if one in 10 people in Wyoming donated, that would come to about 52,000 donors for the state.

In more densely populated areas, a 10 percent rate of return among millions of people means more donations. At the same time, rural systems such as Idaho and Wyoming need more transmitters to reach fewer people than one transmitter in Portland can reach.

William Marcus, a general manager for KUFM TV, a Montana public television station, said the state's public broadcasting service gets a little more than \$1 million in state funding, which is about a quarter of its budget.

That funding goes to pay its core staff at stations in Missoula and Bozeman.

"If all of our state funding were to disappear, I'd like to think we'd still be around, but we'd be a dramatically different service," he said.

COLUMN: IPTV explains legislator appearances

Legislative Notebook

Twin Falls Times News

By Ben Botkin, Staff Reporter

Sunday, February 14, 2010

A senator's question prompted Idaho Public Television to explain a little more in detail about informational spots with legislators in them — and take them off the air for now.

In a recent hearing at the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee, Sen. Bert Brackett, R-Rogerson, asked IPTV General Manager Peter Morrill if a legislator's appearance on one of the spots might give them a political advantage.

Morrill, unsure which show Brackett was referring to at the time, did some checking around and discovered that the senator had seen a promotional spot with Rep. Sue Chew, D-Boise.

State funding didn't pay for the spots.

The spots, which also include participation from Rep. Maxine Bell, R-Jerome, were funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and part of a national effort to show the value of public broadcasting, Morrill wrote in a follow-up letter to JFAC.

"They did not advocate for any funding proposal, only for the general public service that we provide," Morrill wrote in his letter. "To avoid any further confusion, I have instructed my staff to take these spots off the air during the legislative session."

The spots included other community members as well, not just legislators.

Bell said her spot was about the value of public television, noting that she was first filmed before the governor made any proposals about IPTV.

Chew said IPTV's role is crucial in keeping Idahoans connected to legislative issues through its filming and video streaming of the session.

Brackett stressing that he's not against public television, said it's important to be sure public funding doesn't pay for things that might have a political benefit to one individual or entity.

Bipartisan idea

Before the State Land Board voted this week to give public education \$22 million out of the Public Schools Earnings Reserve Account instead of Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna's request for almost \$53 million, Rep. Wendy Jaquet, D-Ketchum, floated an idea to constituents in her weekly newsletter.

"If the land board is reluctant to part with \$53 million dollars for schools, how about half of it?" Jaquet wrote.

The land board's \$22 million came pretty close to half. When asked, Jaquet said none of the land board members talked to her about that idea. The board's members — all elected constitutional officers — live outside Jaquet's district, of course.

So this appears to be a case of Republican and Democrat minds thinking alike.

Lost his voice

There was plenty of conversation on Thursday at the State Land Board meeting about tapping into the reserve fund for education. Attorney General Lawrence Wasden, though, was quiet, letting his chief deputy, Sherm Furey, talk for him.

"He lost his voice," said Bob Cooper, spokesman for Wasden.

It's actually not uncommon for elected officials to lose their voice, especially since the job can require a lot of speeches and talking. For example, in the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton had to take a break from speeches until his vocal cords healed. Early in his career, Clinton was an attorney general himself — in Arkansas. In Wasden's case, he managed to say one hoarse word when it came time to vote: "No."

State should keep IDLA, phase out IPTV funds

Editorial, Idaho Press Tribune

February 11, 2010

Idaho Gov. Butch Otter offered a number of suggestions about how to trim the budget in his State of the State address. Two of those suggestions were to phase out funding for Idaho Public Television and the Idaho Digital Learning Academy.

Idaho Public Television provides commercial-free educational programming free to Idahoans. All you need is an antennae and television set.

Idaho Digital Learning Academy is an Internet-based educational program that allows students of all kinds to take classes without setting foot in a classroom. It serves traditional students as well as those who are homeschooled, at-risk, gifted and adult learners. They can take classes not available on campus, make up lost credits and resolve scheduling conflicts. It's a godsend to students in small, rural districts because it expands the number of courses available to them.

In tough economic times, hard decisions must be made about what is expendable and what isn't.

Some argue that public television is a luxury we can no longer afford. It doesn't get all its funding from the state, so if lawmakers adopt Otter's plan, viewers in more populated regions likely would still get it. People in many rural areas would get blacked out.

Although IPTV's programming is educational, it's not an essential government service. Public television was established nationally in 1967, when information alternatives were few. It was an important function of government then, but with all the options available today on TV and online, it no longer is.

Idaho Digital Learning Academy, however, offers a service many students need. It helps provide their education, which is an essential role of government.

Idaho Digital Academy got \$5 million from the Legislature last year. Idaho Public Television got about \$1.6 million. The digital academy gets some money from student fees, but a loss of state funding would be devastating.

There may be ways to keep the academy and still cut unnecessary spending. Superintendent of Schools Tom Luna says the state pays the academy for classes taught and also pays districts for the same students, even if they don't take a full class load at the district. That's double dipping, and it's expensive.

The Digital Learning Academy would not duplicate the work of the Idaho Education Network. The IEN only provides infrastructure for high-speed broadband Internet connection to schools. IDLA provides curriculum and teachers.

Ideally, we could find a way to combine all of these educational opportunities under one umbrella. That's the future.

Idaho Public Television General Manager Peter Morrill said it could be possible for IPTV to partner with IEN to help bring its shows to the state. If lawmakers phase out IPTV funding over the next four years, such a partnership could help more Idahoans still get that programming.

Bottom line: Idaho Public Television is no longer a vital role of government. Idaho Digital Learning Academy is. It's the future.

Date: February 10, 2010

Hello JFAC.

So where to begin. I think with the words of my seven year old. When the news came on T.V. about the possible loss of funding, my child burst into tears. I then spent 15 minutes trying to calm him down as he was distraught that the State of Idaho could think of getting rid of their support for his channel 4. It has been hard enough to talk to him about the budget issues in our own household, let alone the state government, but he his mad that there is going to be a cut in the education budget as he thinks that his school deserves more, and now I get to explain the problem that PBS is facing. He asked me a question and maybe you can help me answer it. "Why did they spend so much money on a stupid party for the capitol when they can't find the money for the budget?" I didn't know what to say, besides give me time and I will find a way for you to contact your goverment and ask them.

I understand that times are difficult and difficult decisions must be made, but because of those times being difficult, how is it reasonable to expect Idaho households to pony up the money for pay T.V.? Our household budget doesn't allow for the luxury of pay T.V., it barely allows for the luxury of heat and electricity, which seem to be necessities not a "extra". My husband and I both work and make too much to receive any help as the pre-tax amount of our income puts us over the line by \$300. Ironcally that is what I pay out in taxes and medical insurance, but oh well. How are we to get quality, child friendly, educational televiosion if the alternative is to buy it from a cable or sattelite providor, when we can't afford it. Idaho Public Television has been a godsend to our house. From the early education programs that our son watched as a toddler, and helped him to read, to the programs, like NOVA and Nature, that drive his book choices when we go to library to get answers to questions that show bring up for him. He learns from those shows and then learns more by utilizing the information that they give him to then keep exploring and keep learning on his own. This isn't a luxury to our family this is a tool that we use to learn, grow and expand our knowledge.

Yes times are difficult, but please think about the future of our state. We have one chance to help children grow, learn and explore the world around them and we should maximize the opportunities that they get by any means possible. As a state we should look at the future and see what we can do now to make it better in the long run.

Thank you for your time. I know that you are busy and that it is not easy doing the job that you are doing. And if you have an answer that I can tell my son, I appreciate it.

Sincerely,
Jessica Barber, Boise, Idaho

More Legislators Question Idaho Education Network Contract may not go out for re-bid after it expires

By Sharon Fisher, www.newwest.net

2-10-10

The Idaho Education Network came under scrutiny for the second day this week, this time by the Senate Education Committee, as questions continue to arise about building duplicate infrastructure that could cut out local providers, as well as about the role of the Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA).

As with the IEN's hearing on Monday in front of the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC), several Senators said they had heard from Internet providers in their district that they were concerned about being cut out in favor of Qwest, which was one of the three companies awarded the IEN contract in January, 2009.

"I need to know whether the IEN is going to push them aside and say 'sorry,'" said Senator Gary Schroeder, R-Moscow. (Democratic representative Shirley Ringo, also from Moscow, raised a similar issue in JFAC on Monday.) "There will no doubt be some displacement from some folks currently providing service," said Teresa Luna, chief of staff of the Department of Administration, which is overseeing the IEN project. She said it was because the local vendors often couldn't provide the additional services IEN requires, such as a managed secure network and high-speed fiber connections. In response to another question later, though, she noted that whenever possible the IEN used local providers.

Schroeder then asked for a technical analysis, "so I know whether they're being pushed out for technical reasons or other reasons," he said. "Otherwise, I can't make a judicious decision." Luna said such an analysis was available for every high school and committee chairman Senator John Goedde, R-Coeur d'Alene, asked her to make it available to the entire committee.

Senator Dean Mortimer, R-Idaho Falls, was concerned whether schools that already had broadband access were being hooked up over schools that did not have it, and asked about how the schools were prioritized. Luna noted that while the project could have gone for the "low-hanging fruit" of big districts such as Meridian and Boise, and brought a lot of students online quickly, the first phase of 56 schools was primarily in rural districts.

However, now that Qwest has the contract, it may be difficult for any other vendor to compete, even after the five-year contract period is over, committee members learned. "How does a new company compete against the existing contract?" Geodde asked. "Anyone who got it the first time is going to have a competitive advantage" due to the five years of infrastructure equity it had put into the project. Greg Zickau, chief technical officer, responded that while the contract was for five years, it actually might not go out for competitive bid again even after that period. "It is not a given that we would have to recompute the contract," he said. There are three renewal options, and he indicated that a renegotiation would have to be for cause, such as more advanced technology, dissatisfaction with cost, or some other performance factor.

Senator Kate Kelly, D-Boise, asked Zickau about the lawsuit from Syringa Networks, which had been awarded a share of the IEN contract but which filed suit in December, claiming not only that its superior bid was rejected but that it is being shut out even of the portion of the contract it was awarded—including other contracts it had separately with other parts of Idaho state government. Zickau, who was named as a party in the lawsuit, said he

could not comment without legal counsel. In addition, Syringa's winning bid was not mentioned in the discussion—only that of Education Networks of America (ENA); the two companies had partnered to provide their bid.

The committee also talked about the Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA). The IDLA offers remote classes to middle- and high school students and is slated to have its state general funding phased out over the next four years. The Academy is fighting the perception by some in government that the IEN will make it unnecessary.

But they are different, Luna told the committee. "The IEN is the infrastructure, and the IDLA is the commodity that travels on that infrastructure," she said, likening it to the difference between a cable television network and the programming the network carries.

In addition, the IDLA is asynchronous, meaning that students can take classes at any time of the day or night at their convenience, while online classes offered by the IEN will be synchronous, meaning they will be scheduled at a specific time—which can cause problems when school schedules are not aligned. "That is the biggest challenge we'll have to face," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna (who is the brother of Teresa Luna). "It is going to force our schools and districts to develop more common schedules to take advantage of IEN." Idaho is particularly complicated because it has two time zones to contend with, he said.

"IDLA is statutorily our state virtual school," Goedde said. "Yet it is being treated as a content provider. Why is IDLA outside the network and not being treated as a school?" Teresa Luna said it would be brought into the network at a later point.

IDLA had also come up in JFAC earlier this week. First, the Department of Administration was asked by JFAC co-chair Representative Maxine Bell, R-Jerome, to report back in writing to a question by Representative Wendy Jaquet, D-Ketchum, regarding a memo from Administrator of the Division of Financial Management Wayne Hammon criticizing IDLA, suggesting that similar projects in other states don't receive state funding. Second, JFAC co-chair Senator Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, also asked the department to respond in writing to rumors he said he had heard that Director of Administration Mike Gwartney had been involved in the recommendation to reduce IDLA funding.

'A very troubling area...'

Eye On Boise

By Betsy Russell

10:10 a.m. on February 8

JFAC members quizzed Idaho Department of Administration officials so long about the Idaho Education Network this morning that they ran over time, and almost had to skip the Capitol Commission's budget hearing. Among the questions was this one from Senate Finance Chairman Dean Cameron, R-Rupert: "What role did IEN or the agency, Mr. Gwartney or the Department of Administration, play in the recommendations to reduce the Idaho Digital Learning Academy and Idaho Public Television? That's a rumor that's out there that I'd like you to follow up on," Cameron said, indicating that Admin officials could get back to him later. "The second half of that rumor is that the governor asked IEN to deliver his State of the State message to four schools, and IEN was unable to do so, but Public Television then did so. Can you get back to us with those answers?" At that, Co-Chair Maxine Bell, R-Jerome, said, "Thank you, and we would all appreciate that information. ... We're running way past, but this is a very troubling area of the budget."

Our view: Luna's smart idea — tap reserve dollars to help Idaho school kids

- Idaho Statesman

Published: 02/07/10

Don't kid yourself. Idaho public schools will take a budget cut this year.

That will mean fewer dollars to help early elementary students pick up reading. Fewer dollars to help all students improve their math skills. These are among state schools Superintendent Tom Luna's favorite programs - initiatives that are improving student performance.

A strategic - and inventive - \$52.8 million withdrawal from a little-known budget reserve could soften the blow.

This year, that's as good as it's going to get. This year, that's also the least the state can do.

Luna has hit on perhaps the smartest budget solution of the 2010 legislative session, a creative way to backfill the 2010-11 public schools budget.

Here's how the reserve fund works - and, ultimately, why Luna's plan works:

- The public schools get a portion of their money from two endowment sources: a permanent endowment fund (reflecting proceeds from investments in stocks and bonds), and state endowment lands (largely reflecting proceeds from timber sales).
- The money gets banked away in the Public Schools Earnings Reserve Fund. K-12 receives about \$31 million a year from this fund. But the fund has grown over the years, reaping benefits of robust investment returns. When the 2010-11 budget year begins on July 1, the balance is expected to sit at roughly \$90.4 million, a three-year cushion.
- Luna wants to make two withdrawals from the fund. In addition to a routine \$31.3 million annual payment, he seeks a one-time \$52.8 million withdrawal. At the end of the 2010-11 budget year, the fund would still have enough money to cover a normal 2011-12 payment.
- The \$52.8 million withdrawal, as Luna carefully points out, does not affect the endowment fund's principal. The school payment would come from proceeds from the endowments.

Yes, there is an element of risk to Luna's plan.

The first risk is the inherent danger of using one-time money to pay for ongoing needs. Under normal conditions, this kind of unsustainable spending would border on recklessness. But these are not normal times. The \$52.8 million takes a significant bite out of K-12 budget cuts that would otherwise total at least \$135 million.

Luna has numbers to back up his case. The state is gradually weaning K-12 from one-time money. The 2009-10 budget is propped up with \$195 million in state rainy-day funds and federal economic stimulus dollars. Even if Luna's \$52.8 million withdrawal becomes reality, the 2010-11 budget would include \$90 million in one-time dollars. That isn't great, but the trend is moving in the right direction.

The second risk comes in draining down a reserve account that protects one of K-12's funding sources. Luna says experts have reviewed the worst-case scenario - a combination of low stock returns and low timber prices - leaving him convinced that the fund can absorb a one-time withdrawal.

We agree, but we fully recognize that the state is governing in a risk-averse mode. Gov. Butch Otter, for one, has recommended a zero-growth budget for 2010-11 - even though Idaho chief economist Mike Ferguson expects the state to collect \$83.4 million in new revenue.

There are plenty of unknowns. But this much is known: Public schools are facing deep budget cuts, and Luna has offered a way to ease the impact on 275,000 Idaho kids.

On Wednesday, Luna presents his idea to the four other members of the state Land Board. For three state officials with a narrow job description - Attorney General Lawrence Wasden, Secretary of State Ben Yursa and Controller Donna Jones - this represents an unusual chance to stick up for school kids.

And for Otter, it represents a great chance to support what he says is his top spending priority. Defending his ill-conceived and unpopular plans to zero out small agencies - such as state parks and public TV - Otter has talked about freeing up any spare dollars for schools.

Now, there's \$52.8 million at play. Otter, and the entire Land Board, should put it to use for kids.

"Our View" is the editorial position of the Idaho Statesman. It is an unsigned opinion expressing the consensus of the Statesman's editorial board. To comment or suggest a topic, e-mail editorial@idahostatesman.com.

Public TV too valuable for Idaho to abandon

Spokesman-Review Editorial Board

February 6, 2010

Spokane Spokesman-Review

Idaho Gov. Butch Otter's proposal to end the subsidy for Idaho Public Television raises interesting theoretical questions: Is this something government should be funding? Couldn't it be fully privatized?

Yes, it could be fully privatized, but it wouldn't be the same. Before weighing whether to eliminate funding, the Legislature should first weigh what would be lost. One-fourth of IPTV's operating budget comes from the state. Sixty-two percent of its budget is from private donations. IPTV already outpaces most of its peers in private fundraising. Some states cover as much as half of the budgets of their statewide public stations.

This suggests that it would be a long shot to replace the annual \$1.7 million state subsidy. That money is used to maintain the state's 41 translator sites, which beam programming to 97 percent of the state. If the funding isn't replaced, large swaths of rural areas will lose public television. Areas such as Coeur d'Alene could still pick up the KSPS signal out of Spokane, but Idaho-centric programming would be lost.

Pete Morrill, the head of IPTV, suggests that a market-based model would mean Southern Idaho's Treasure Valley could probably sustain programming, but few other areas could.

So the question before the Legislature is actually more severe. Is the demise of Idaho Public Television in its current form worth it? We don't think so, because programs such as "Legislature Live" and "Idaho Reports" keep the entire state up to date on the workings of public officials, and that access to government is crucial. In addition, rural areas would lose valuable educational and cultural programming they can't get anywhere else.

Of course, the value depends on whether one watches or not. Otter says he doesn't. But many Idahoans do, as evidenced by the thousands of people who have joined a Facebook group in support of IPTV. An overflow crowd attended a hearing in Boise.

Otter's plan to phase out funding over four years ignores some hidden costs. IPTV has spent \$22 million for digital conversion over the past 10 years, with \$6 million from the feds with strings attached. If the station cannot maintain the equipment because of budget cuts, it would have to repay \$1 million to \$2 million.

We understand the difficult budget situation and the need to enact spending cuts. The station should certainly share in the pain. But too much would be lost by completely pulling the plug.

Allred faults Otter for 'irrational pessimism'

Eye On Boise

By Betsy Russell, Spokesman Review

February 5

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Keith Allred slammed GOP Gov. Butch Otter today for what he called his "irrational pessimism and recklessness," saying that in two weeks of travel around the state, he's heard concerns from people across the political spectrum over Otter's proposed budget cuts to schools, Idaho Public Television and state parks. You can read Allred's full release below; I'm awaiting a response from the Otter campaign.

Allred For Idaho

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OTTER'S "IRRATIONAL PESSIMISM"

After nearly two weeks of travel throughout Idaho, gubernatorial candidate Keith Allred says that Idahoans from across the political spectrum are united in their concern over Otter's erratic leadership.

"In communities across Idaho, I've heard Republicans, Democrats, and independents express outrage over Otter's proposed cuts to education, Idaho Public Television and Idaho State Parks," Allred says. "These aren't partisan complaints.

These are just people who think Otters' proposals are the wrong answers."

Allred agrees with what's he heard. "These are the toughest economic circumstances in Idaho in my lifetime. We need good leadership more than ever," Allred says. "But what we're getting from Gov. Otter is irrational pessimism and recklessness. Idaho deserves better."

Otter's proposal to cut education ignores evidence-based projections predicting more than \$80 million in increased revenue.

Otter's proposal to cut state funding to Idaho Public Television would save the state just \$1.5 million a year. That's about \$1 for each Idahoan.

"Idaho Public Television is one of the most effective ways for Idahoans to keep track of what their elected officials are doing in Boise in this geographically dispersed state," Allred says. "It's one of the few things that really bring us together as a state. A dollar a year is a bargain for that."

Otter's proposal to cut funding to Idaho State Parks is of a piece with his reckless idea to cut education and IPTV. It is a proposal that, like many other Otter ideas, has been rebuffed by everyday Idahoans and the Legislature.

Even as he's proposed these cuts, the Otter administration has spent more than \$70,000 for showy ribbon cutting events to celebrate highway projects, according to the Idaho Statesman.

"Otter is waving a white flag of surrender to circumstances," Allred says.

"That goes against how I was raised. On my grandfather's ranch, when times got tough, you rolled up your sleeves and went to work."

Keith Allred, Candidate for governor 2010
www.allredforidaho.com

Idaho governor's race: Allred accuses Otter of 'irrational pessimism'

Share

By Kevin Richert, Idaho Statesman
02/05/2010 - 2:38pm.

This just in from Democratic gubernatorial candidate Keith Allred: a press release accusing incumbent GOP Gov. Butch Otter of "irrational pessimism and recklessness."

My quick 30-second analysis: a good use of snippet, a bit of a forced reference to Allred's ranching roots and a pretty far-ranging criticism of budget proposals that already have come under fire at the Statehouse.

Here's the full press release:

After nearly two weeks of travel throughout Idaho, gubernatorial candidate Keith Allred says that Idahoans from across the political spectrum are united in their concern over (Gov. Butch) Otter's erratic leadership.

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The Kill Joy

Otter's inferior past is Idaho's inferior future

By Bill Cope, Boise Weekly

February 3, 2010

What kind of people never watch PBS?

You're thinking: "Cope's about to go off another deep end here and wallow in a foul sump of over-generalization."

Not true! Yes, I am about to wallow in a sump of generalization, but it is not over-generalization (or even mildly exaggerated generalization) as it is clear to anyone with the eyes to see and the brains to interpret that a great many people are satisfied--dare I say enthused--about being lumped together like poorly mashed potatoes with others who share their passions. (Bronco Nation ... need I say more?)

Further, there is evidence aplenty that Americans are as divided in matters of culture and taste and intellectual curiosity as they are in their politics. Therefore, when I start with a question like, "What kind of people never watch PBS?" I am confident the limb I will soon shinny out on will hold the weight of my argument. So then ... on to what kind of people never watch PBS:

People who have never missed a lap of the Daytona 500. Honestly, would it come as a surprise to learn that anyone entertained by watching noisy, garishly painted cars run around in circles has never seen a Jane Austen or Dickens tale as told on Masterpiece? Or the pro wrestling crowd: would you, skeptical reader, expect to find a bleacher of Steve Austin fans at an episode of Great Performances?

Global warming deniers and disavowers of evolution, I do not see them tuning in to Nova, Nature or anything with Alan Alda in it, do you? Far too much demonstrable science for their delicate minds. And home schoolers ... what use would home schoolers have with Sesame Street and Reading Rainbow when there's a Bible in the house?

Heavy drinkers, meth addicts, wild-eyed Libertarians and biker gangs--I bet good money they don't watch Globe Trekker or Gwen Ifill's show. And I double that if any of them could tell Bill Moyers apart from the last guy they slugged in a bar.

Rodeo people. I question whether anyone who enjoys seeing a doggie roped or a bull rode has any use for anything as complicated as Jane Tennison solving a murder on Mystery or a Frontline expose of the credit card racket.

Students who do poorly in school, self-satisfied ideologues who already believe they have all the answers, an alarming portion of the Idaho Legislature, and monster truck enthusiasts ... can we expect them to sit through a Ken Burns' epic documentary? I mean, really. That would take a measurable attention span, yes? Oh, and our governor. According to Lori Otter, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter never watches PBS, either.

"There you go again, Cope. You with your snooty, scornful elitism!"

No, that's not true either. Not entirely. I mean, I didn't set out to be an elitist. In the beginning, I didn't once think my proclivities were more polished than ... oh, let's say ... Otter's. And to this day, I'm still a scrubby Idaho farm boy at heart, albeit with an abiding respect and love for what great talents and great minds have bequeathed our humble species.

The way I see it, I stayed the same, while huge slabs of the American demographic sunk like wet dung around me. Nope, I'm no elitist. And I can only be considered one when seen in perspective with the--(new word!)--inferiorists who toil so diligently to drag America down to their depths.

Write that down--"inferiorists"--and feel free to use it. Other than the more widely recognized terms--hillbilly, yahoo, knuckle-dragger, tea-bagger--what better to call those who so willfully avoid the elevated accomplishments that for many of us define the finest in human endeavor.

I consider the Public Broadcasting System one of those elevated accomplishments. Here we have an effort, made by a generous and responsive side of government, to bring to the citizenry the finest in a multitude of human endeavors--art, science, education, civil discourse, travel--summed up: our common heritage. PBS is government at its best, and I am more than happy to have my taxes used for such a blessing.

Sadly, our doggie-choking governor's approach to leadership amounts to, "If it brings joy to people, government has no business doing it." We are in hard times, truly--compliments of the economic policies of another inferiorist who relished dressing up like a cowboy--and we might understand Otter's need to pare funding across the spectrum, including that minuscule portion of the state budget that helps support Idaho Public Television.

Yet Butch is not content to make IdahoPTV suffer temporarily along with every other facet of the state's business only until the economy gets healthy. He's not paring them back; he's rubbing them out.

"You lie, Cope! Otter only wants IdahoPTV to carry its own weight. If you snotty snobs want it, you snotty snobs should pay for it. Why should my tax dollars go to anything that makes you happy?"

Same reason my tax dollars go to things that make you happy, Bubba. Why should I be paying for that bridge you take to work every morning? Or that school your kid goes to? Or that buffoon you send to the Legislature every winter? Because that's what civilized people do for one another, that's why. And it's not my fault if you don't have whatever it takes to appreciate something beyond your own meager world.

Frankly, that's the most disgusting aspect to this matter of Otter and IdahoPTV. He never watches, so he's blissfully ignorant about what he'll be stealing from Idahoans.

Malad residents fighting public TV cuts

By John O'Connell

February 2, 2010

Idaho State Journal

MALAD — A Malad woman is seeking to organize opposition to state cuts proposed by Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter that would terminate public television broadcasts to rural Idaho communities.

Sharlene Mason said for many in her community, public television is the only televised source of information about the Idaho State Legislature. She fears cuts to public television would leave several people in rural Idaho in the dark about state matters.

"I wrote to the governor yesterday that maybe you want to suggest we at this end of the state want to annex to Utah because basically that's what news we're getting. That's who's telling us what to think and what to consider on everything from politics on state issues," Mason said.

Under Otter's proposed public television cuts, state funding would be phased out over four years, starting in July. Public television officials anticipate 41 of 42 translators that rebroadcast signals into smaller communities would be

allowed to deteriorate until they're not functional with no funding to make repairs. The Pocatello public television studio, KISU, as well as KUID in Moscow and the studio located in the Joe R. Williams building in Boise would likely be closed, said Ron Pisaneschi, director of content for Idaho Public Television. The Boise studio provides live coverage of the Legislature.

Pisaneschi noted the country is divided into television markets; communities are assigned a market and receive network television from their primary stations. In Idaho communities assigned to markets in other states - Malad for example - cable and satellite customers don't get Idaho news, with the exception of public television.

"If they lose public television, they aren't going to have the option of the legislative coverage we do," Pisaneschi said.

Pisaneschi said public television has four channels and "general audience numbers are holding up."

Programs about the Legislature aren't as popular among viewers as programs such as "Antiques Road Show." Pisaneschi views the legislative coverage as a public service and believes such programming couldn't be supported by private donations.

"Our audience for legislative channels is not enormous. We provide this as a service," he said. "That's our mission. In some ways, that's part of our dilemma. That's what the state funds in large part allow to make happen."

Mason is among those viewers who appreciate the service public television offers with its legislative programs.

"It's imperative that we know what's going on in the People's House, and this is the only way of getting it," said Mason, who purchased two memberships in public television to show her support. "How are (voters) going to vote intelligently if they don't get the issues? You don't have citizens who are willing to help and willing to make sacrifices unless you keep them informed."

Pisaneschi said the numbers have been run, and there's simply no way to operate without the state funding. He understands that all government services will be asked to take cuts given the state's revenue shortfall. He just [doesn't] understand why public television's cut should be 100 percent.

Our View: A case for dollars for higher education, landing with a thud

OUR VIEW HIGHER EDUCATION

- Idaho Statesman

Published: 01/31/10

One by one, college and university presidents appeared before the Legislature's Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee last week in a series of bleak hearings. College of Western Idaho President Bert Glandon appealed for an extra \$1 million to handle increasing enrollment, recommended by Gov. Butch Otter. Boise State University President Bob Kustra said the universities are "losing ground almost every year."

The universities lamented cutting staffs and gutting programs. They described a drain on reserves - and a strain on students and parents who pay tuition.

The reaction is shocking. A collective shrug from taxpayers. Open skepticism from some budget-writers. Even though JFAC co-chair Sen. Dean Cameron praises the collaboration on community college campuses, he said CWI should not count on an extra \$1 million.

Does Idaho believe in higher education's power to change lives and drive economic growth? Or is that cheap talk in a legislative session defined by tight budgets?

Idahoans are incensed at the prospect of (some) budget cuts.

The biggest furor of the 2010 session surrounded Otter's tin-eared bid to wean the Department of Parks and Recreation from the general fund. Rep. Maxine Bell, a Jerome Republican and JFAC co-chair, says she has been inundated with e-mails urging her to save Idaho Public Television. A bipartisan who's who of advocates and politicians, including two former governors, came to the Human Rights Commission's defense.

There has been no similar outcry about higher education - even though the universities' constituency includes tens of thousands of students, alumni and staff.

Granted, by proposing to zero out agencies, Otter has stirred up visceral emotions. State parks is synonymous with family picnics, says Bell; public television is synonymous with watching "Sesame Street" with a son or daughter. For Idahoans who remember the Aryan Nations movement, and its stain on Idaho's image, maintaining the Human Rights Commission is a serious matter.

But where is the public outcry - or even public heartburn - over higher ed? Otter wants to cut \$19 million from the four-year schools' general budget for 2009-10 and another \$6.6 million in 2010-11 - cuts that far exceed the general fund dollars for Parks and Recreation, public TV, the Human Rights Commission and the other small agencies on his chopping block.

On JFAC, the reactions are mixed - even among leaders who represent the same legislative district, crunch the same numbers and generally reach similar conclusions.

The universities have absorbed "tremendous cuts," Bell said, and she is worried about saddling students with burdensome tuition increases. Cameron, R-Rupert, says the universities are collaborating too little, competing too much and complaining too loudly. "I think there's a little too much crying there," Cameron told the Statesman editorial board.

A case in point: When President Duane Nellis testified Monday, he said the University of Idaho is down to about \$2.5 million in reserves - unfettered dollars available for any use. That means the school is one fire or flood away from being tapped out. Cameron believes the universities can use reserves set aside for future bond payments.

The idea of draining reserves in a short-term jam is hardly new; indeed, state schools superintendent Tom Luna is pushing a \$53 million withdrawal to help cover K-12. Our bigger concern is higher ed's credibility problem with one of the state's most powerful decision makers.

Academics by profession, university presidents have not always been politic in articulating the problems on the campuses. Many of their moves - eliminating unpopular programs, freezing hires or contemplating furloughs - draw little sympathy, since many private sector employers took similar steps long ago. In an editorial board meeting last week, Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas appealed for time, as universities adjust to budgets that rely less heavily on state dollars. He undercut his case, however, when he could not cite specific cuts already in place at ISU.

The universities can't afford to make a less-than-convincing case. Last week, they made their pitches. But they didn't change the dialogue.

"Our View" is the editorial position of the Idaho Statesman. It is an unsigned opinion expressing the consensus of the Statesman's editorial board. To comment on an editorial or suggest a topic, e-mail editorial@idahostatesman.com.

Big spending by Idaho Transportation Department amid cuts to other agencies

ITD spent \$60,000 on three I-84 ceremonies last year. 'We have questions,' says top Otter aide.

BY CYNTHIA SEWELL - cmsewell@idahostatesman.com

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Published: 01/31/10

Joe Jaszewski / Idaho Statesman

Idaho Gov. Butch Otter and State Sen. Patti Anne Lodge cheer at a dedication ceremony for the I-84 Garrity to Meridian widening project.

Joe Jaszewski / Idaho Statesman

Photographers at a dedication ceremony for the I-84 Garrity to Meridian widening project were invited on to this elevated platform to get a better view of Idaho Gov. Butch Otter ordering construction workers to move the cones to open the widened freeway.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CONNECTING IDAHO: PROJECT MANAGED BY PRIVATE CONTRACTOR

After the 2006 Legislature approved the \$1 billion Connecting Idaho road-building program, the Idaho Transportation Department selected a contractor to manage the six major projects it entailed.

To date, ITD has paid \$17.1 million to the management group, called Connecting Idaho Partners, a partnership of URS - formerly Washington Group International - and Denver-based CH2M Hill. The Connecting Idaho program involves agreements with more than 60 individual consultants, including RBCI, which is Connecting Idaho's primary communication and public involvement firm.

The Connecting Idaho Partners contract and some other contracts were signed before Pam Lowe was appointed ITD director in December 2006. Shortly after her appointment, Lowe told budget lawmakers she had instructed ITD to do as much work as possible in-house because she intended to reduce the Washington Group's management contract.

Among the claims in her wrongful termination lawsuit, Lowe said she was fired because she tried to trim the \$52 million contract awarded to URS/Washington Group International and CH2M Hill, which had donated money to Gov. Butch Otter and/or Sen. John McGee, R-Caldwell, who chairs the Senate Transportation Committee.

THE COSTS

\$69,606

Total cost of the seven ceremonies

\$60,035

Cost of the three ceremonies put together by RBCI (labor: \$42,217; direct costs: \$17,818)

\$9,571

Cost of four ceremonies put together by ITD

\$17,778: Interstate 84, Ten Mile interchange groundbreaking ceremony on June 23

Direct costs: \$5,518 (no lodging or travel expenses)

Labor costs: \$12,260 (RBCI: 163 hours)

\$2,356: U.S. 2 Dover bridge groundbreaking ceremony on July 22

Direct costs: \$2,356 (includes lodging and travel for staff/state officials)

Labor costs: ITD staff

\$24,637: I-84 Vista interchange groundbreaking ceremony on Aug. 5

Direct costs: \$6,215 (no lodging or travel expenses)

Labor costs: \$18,422 (RBCI: 252 hours)

\$2,324: Idaho 48/Rigby groundbreaking ceremony on Aug. 12

Direct costs: \$2,324 (includes lodging and travel expenses for staff/state officials)

Labor costs: ITD staff

\$2,778: Interstate 86, Chubbuck/Pocatello interchange groundbreaking ceremony on Aug. 12

Direct costs: \$2,778 (includes lodging and travel expenses for staff/state officials)

Labor costs: ITD staff

\$2,113: U.S. 93 Twin Falls alternate route groundbreaking ceremony on Sept. 14

Direct costs: \$2,113 (includes travel and lodging expenses for staff/state officials)

Labor costs: ITD staff

\$17,620: Interstate 84, new third lane dedication ceremony on Oct. 30

Direct costs: \$6,085 (no lodging or travel expenses)

Labor costs: \$11,535 (RBCI: 163 hours)

Gov. Butch Otter, Sen. John McGee and other local and state dignitaries stood above Interstate 84 last August in a groundbreaking ceremony for the rebuilding of the Vista Road interchange.

The one-hour event cost taxpayers more than \$24,000.

Since June, the Idaho Transportation Department has spent almost \$70,000 on seven such groundbreaking or dedication ceremonies - which Otter's office wanted to be the "governor's signature events."

The spending - mostly federal stimulus dollars and cash borrowed through the Connecting Idaho road-building program - came as the Otter administration prepared to propose the first-ever midyear holdbacks for public schools and major cuts throughout state government that would leave several commissions, agencies and the Department of Parks and Recreation without any state general tax funding at all.

Four of these highway ceremonies, all in northern or eastern Idaho, were put together by ITD's own communications staff at a total cost of \$9,571 - an average of \$2,393 per ceremony.

But for the three Valley events, ITD paid RBCI, a private consulting firm. The cost for these three: \$60,035 - an average of \$20,012 per ceremony. All in spending that the governor's top staffers say they didn't even know was accruing.

"I am appalled. I am appalled," said House Transportation Chairwoman JoAn Wood, R-Rigby.

The Legislature is trying to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars, she said, and for the past couple of years, lawmakers have been pushing ITD to become more efficient.

"This is very frustrating," Wood said. "We've been trying to get our hands around it. Obviously, there is some work yet to be done."

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE TAKES MORE CONTROL

The summer's first ceremony, the nearly \$18,000 Ten Mile interchange groundbreaking on June 23, was fraught with communication glitches between ITD and the governor's office - dignitaries and shovels were in the wrong places, a piece of heavy equipment slated to be part of the ceremony caused some bewilderment.

Following those blunders, the governor's office stepped in and took a bigger role in coordinating the ceremonies.

Otter's communication director, Mark Warbis, e-mailed Otter's scheduler requesting dates be set for upcoming ITD ceremonies. "We are making them the governor's signature events," Warbis wrote.

"After the Ten Mile ceremony, we were left with the impression that the planning and the execution had been less than we would have expected from a professional agency," Warbis said.

The governor wanted to show the public that "work was being done, jobs were being created and improvements were being made as a result of your transportation dollars," Warbis told the Statesman this week.

Warbis instigated a new ceremony-planning process: ITD Communication Director Jeff Stratten had to submit plans to the governor's office for each ceremony six weeks in advance, followed by four-week and one-week plan updates. But they never talked about the cost or budgets in these meetings.

"My job was then to decide how best to use the resources available to me to meet those expectations," Stratten said. "With the four other events held over the summer, the need to support the Governor's Transportation Task Force, production of publications and other materials to support the governor's executive order (for regular accountability reports) and the other responsibilities of the office ... it was determined assistance was needed."

Warbis said this week that at the time, he assumed ITD staff had put together the Ten Mile ceremony - and the following ones. But ITD was using a contractor. The agency's own communication department - with 9.5 employees and a 2010 budget of about \$640,000 - had been spread thin by the flurry of Connecting Idaho and stimulus projects, Stratten said.

Rosemary Curtin, owner of RBCI, said she gave ceremony-planning materials to Stratten, but neither she nor her staff attended the regular planning meetings between Stratten and the governor's staff. She did attend the ceremonies and billed the state for setting up and taking down the event materials and a host of other tasks associated with the event.

Warbis and Otter's press secretary Jon Hanian said they had never even heard of Curtin and do not remember her from the events.

"I don't know what she did. I see what the invoices say," Warbis said. "I know what we did, and some of the stuff that she lists on there were done by the governor's office."

"At this point, we have questions, we have some concerns," said David Hensley, Otter's deputy chief of staff and transportation aide. Hensley said he plans to work with ITD's new director, Brian Ness, "in getting to the bottom of this." That review will include not only these ceremonies, but the use, management and oversight of contractors.

Curtin said ITD never talked to her about the need to reduce expenses or asked whether a ceremony could be cut altogether to save money. If the state wanted to spend less money, "I would step aside in a flash," she said. "I am conscientious about taxpayers' money. I don't want to go over budget. I never have É I honor that dollar amount."

McGee, chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, said he, too, was unaware a private consultant was being used for some of the ceremonies. He said he was invited to the events but was not involved in planning them.

"No one has been more aggressive than me in pushing the Idaho Transportation Department to come up with more efficiencies," McGee said. "This may be an example that we need to continue to make the department more efficient. I am confident that under the leadership of the new director that will happen."

But the old director didn't endorse this spending, either.

Then-ITD Director Pam Lowe chose not to attend the first ceremony, which took place after the ITD board in May asked her to resign (she refused to resign). The other six ceremonies occurred after she was fired July 16.

Lowe is suing the state for wrongful termination. She told the Statesman she was not included in the ceremony planning or consulted about the costs. Had it been her decision, Lowe said, she would have wanted the staff to do as much work as possible in-house.

ITD Board Chairman Darrell Manning said he learned about the three costly ceremonies after the Statesman requested public records to verify the expenses. He was aware of how much the in-house ceremonies cost, he said, but not the others.

"I certainly will look at them from this point on," Manning said.

New ITD Director Brian Ness, who started Jan. 11, told a joint transportation committee: "I intend to review every program and every expenditure."

Manning told the Statesman he concurs. "We will be looking at everything with a very fine-toothed comb to find ways to save money and put more money on the roadways."

HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE TO PLAN?

The Vista interchange groundbreaking ceremony held Aug. 5 was the most expensive of the three ceremonies planned and staged by RBCI. The firm billed the state \$18,422.50 for 252 hours of labor for the Vista groundbreaking - an average of about \$73.10 an hour.

RBCI incurred an additional \$5,390 in ceremony-related expenses that included program design and printing (\$806); "dignitary mailing" (\$127.01); sound system rental (\$535); portable toilet (\$63.60); chairs, tables and tent rental (\$629.40); and nametags (\$39).

The direct expenses for each of RBCI's ceremonies were almost twice as much as the direct expenses for the ceremonies put together by ITD staff, which were out-of-town and included travel and lodging expenses that RBCI's Boise-area ceremonies did not.

The other two events RBCI coordinated took about 160 hours each. The Vista event took more time because it involved working with private property owners, Curtin said.

Stratten and Curtin both said taking 160 to 250 hours to plan and stage a groundbreaking or dedication ceremony is not unreasonable, even though the event itself may last less than one hour.

The number of hours RBCI billed for each ceremony is within the scope of its contract, and RBCI did not perform duplicate work or bill ITD inappropriately, Stratten said. "I was fully aware of RBCI's work tasks and hours," he said. He did not tell the governor's office, he said.

Stratten could not provide specifics on how many hours he and his staff had spent working with Curtin on her three ceremonies or how long it had taken to coordinate the other four ceremonies in-house because ITD staffers do not code their timesheets.

"It takes a tremendous amount of hours," Curtin said. "I know people don't anticipate it takes this level of effort" - creating mail lists, talking points, programs, press releases and schedules; scouting sites and working with land-owners; and arranging dignitaries, tents, stages, sound systems and other logistics.

One month after the Vista project's kick-off, the Ada County Highway District held a dedication ceremony for the newly completed \$20.7 million East ParkCenter bridge - at a direct cost to taxpayers of \$1,819.81, not including staff time.

Independent public relations consultant Joanne Taylor said she spent three months putting together a three-night opening event for Downtown Boise's Bonefish Grill in 2008 when she worked for Drake Cooper, a local marketing and communications firm. She coordinated with restaurant owners, five local performing arts groups and the media, and traveled to Washington to test Bonefish Grill's fare. Her budget: \$15,000.

Under an existing contract, the state worked with Drake Cooper in 2007 to put together an event for the Division of Tourism and Idaho Wine Commission at Grape Escape in Downtown Boise when the Snake River Valley was designated an American Viticultural Area. It took Taylor and another staff person about one week to put together the event at a cost of \$4,500.

'CEREMONIES ARE ESSENTIAL'

Stratten said these ceremonies - typically media events, not public ones - are valuable to major road projects for three reasons.

- They focus media attention and communicate to the public that a major construction project is starting (or ending) and what the traffic and business impacts will be.
- They mark major economic and safety milestones for communities and the state.
- They celebrate the efforts of state and community leaders - sometimes over the course of decades - to bring projects to fruition.

"As silly as a ceremony may be, there is some great value in communicating," Curtin said. "We don't just look at the ceremony as a one-hour event. We look at the ceremony as setting our communication strategy for the rest of the project."

"Getting the message out was our first priority whether the governor was there or not," Curtin said.

Wood is not convinced ceremonies are a necessity. "It's nice work that's being done, and I'm sure they are proud of it," but a groundbreaking ceremony is not required to get a road built, she said.

One of the less-costly ceremonies took place in Wood's own town of Rigby for just \$2,324. "The entourage that came to even my little town was a considerable amount of people. It was nice to get the attention, it was a lot of people that came but you have to question the expense."

Wood was taken aback when she learned the consultant spent 252 hours coordinating the Vista ceremony. "I don't think that's justified with the strain that's on people to be asked for more money for transportation," said Wood. "That is disappointing. I am sorry that we think that's necessary."

ITD has an ongoing professional services contract with RBCI, generally paid through then-Gov. Dirk Kempthorne's Connecting Idaho highways program. But the agency was not contractually obligated to hold those ceremonies or to use RBCI instead of doing the ceremonies in-house. Those decisions were ITD's, not hers, Curtin said.

"Whether you do it in-house or out-of-house that's a policy-level decision," Curtin said. "I am not the policy-maker."

IS PRIVATIZING ALWAYS A BETTER DEAL?

These ceremony expenses come at a time when the governor is ordering ITD and all state agencies to dig deep to cover revenue shortfalls.

Some ITD departments are finding innovative ways to shave dollars. The aviation department started turning airstrip windsocks inside out to extend their use, a savings of \$1,750 annually. The administrative department cut back on printing official highway maps to save \$62,500 a year. Last winter, ITD put some of its administrative employees in snowplows to save the cost of hiring operators.

In some cases, it can be more cost-effective for ITD to out-source work to consultants who can provide the expertise ITD needs without having to put someone on the state payroll, Stratten said.

Use of consultants also creates and sustains jobs, which is a goal of both the Connecting Idaho and stimulus road-building programs, Stratten said. The agency estimates the two programs - which have spent nearly \$800 million - have preserved or created an estimated 13,000 jobs.

RBCI has received \$1.2 million since 2006 for communication and public involvement work on ITD road projects, mainly on Connecting Idaho. RBCI's public communication work represents approximately 0.2 percent of the total program cost to date.

Some of the work, like public information meetings, is federally mandated, Stratten said. Ceremonies are not federally required, but they are an allowable expense under federal guidelines.

The money used to pay for the ceremonies - whether stimulus or Connecting Idaho bond money - had to be spent within each respective program, but no federal rules required the state spend money on ceremonies, officials said.

RBCI's hourly rate under its ITD contracts ranges from \$70 to \$85, which includes salary, benefits and overhead. RBCI has nine employees. The hourly rates of all consultants used by ITD are audited by internal review and must fall within federal standards, Stratten said. RBCI's rates are within the allowable range.

Hourly wages of ITD's communications staff range from \$21.93 to \$39.82, which include benefits but not overhead.

ITD's workload was doubled by the projects funded by Connecting Idaho (also called GARVEE, for Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles) and the federal stimulus, Stratten said. But there were no new communications money or staff.

"We think it is effective to use private-sector partners to help us with peak times and peak and heavy workloads," Stratten said. "I-84 is currently at its peak. It was not possible for the ITD Communications Office to conduct the intensive public involvement efforts needed on the I-84 corridor. ... Use of consultants was a wise and necessary investment in the program."

On the air ... for now: KUID in Moscow continues role with Idaho Public TV despite proposal to cut state funding

By Holly Bowen, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Saturday, January 30, 2010

With screens lining the walls and wires coming out of just about every direction, Idaho Public Television's Moscow station is a bit of a history museum.

The master control room, for example, features the latest digital equipment from 2008 alongside the still-functioning switchboard-looking relics of 1960s television.

If Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's budget recommendations for this year come to fruition, it could spell the end of a television era for Moscow and the state of Idaho.

Otter's proposal would cut Idaho Public Television's budget by \$400,000 each year for four years. At that point, the state-supplied money would dry up, and IdahoPTV would be forced to rely on viewer donations alone.

Peter Morrill, IdahoPTV's general manager, has said 82 percent of the agency's donations currently come from southwest Idaho, and populations in other parts of the state would be unlikely to raise enough to support stations outside of Boise.

That's an unsettling prospect for staff and students who spend their days working at KUID, IdahoPTV's Moscow station. It's only one of three public television stations in the state, the others being KAID in Boise and KISU in Pocatello.

KISU, which recently received a studio upgrade on the Idaho State University campus, also is threatened by the proposed budget cut.

But the prospect of IdahoPTV going away is especially unusual in Moscow, where KUID has operated from the University of Idaho campus since 1965. It's housed in the small Radio-TV Center behind the Administration and Albertson buildings and next to the Shattuck Arboretum.

"The first public television station in the state of Idaho was right here," said Kris Freeland, station manager of KUID.

Back then, the three stations operated independently, and KUID produced its own original content until 1982, when IdahoPTV became a statewide network.

“Michael Kirk was a producer here, when we had producers here,” Freeland said. “And now, he’s at (PBS) ‘Frontline.’ “

Now the Boise station is responsible for most of IdahoPTV’s programming, Freeland said, but KUID plays a major role in the distribution of nonprofit educational content throughout the state.

Freeland said she helps coordinate short, educational programs that air in the early morning hours. They’re meant to be recorded by teachers to be replayed later in the classroom, free of charge.

KUID also broadcasts some professional-development programs for educators that instruct them on everything from how to teach reading to how to conduct research.

Freeland even has something up her sleeve for parents who find themselves awake with a baby in the middle of the night.

“I actually have some parenting programs I run about 4 a.m.,” she said.

While KUID, as an entity of IdahoPTV, doesn’t produce its own content, broadcasting and video production students in the UI’s School of Journalism and Mass Media use the station to create two original television shows: “Mostly Moscow” and “UI Voices.”

Freeland said the UI-produced content isn’t available on the over-the-air broadcasts that go out from KUID’s transmitter on Paradise Ridge. Instead, about four hours of UI programming is shown every day on the Channel 8 feed of KUID on Time Warner Cable in Moscow.

Hundreds of students each year spend large chunks of their semesters in KUID’s newly upgraded digital production control room, studio and master control room.

Ken Segota, KUID’s chief engineer, started working at the station in 1967 when he was a UI student.

The station was so important to him, he began working there full-time and ended up two credits shy of his bachelor’s degree in video production. He took the final steps to graduate about five years ago, when the station was celebrating its 40th anniversary.

Segota still spends his days in the studio, but now the tables are turned, and he’s the one helping students “whenever they’ve got a lab in here, usually three times a week,” he said.

His job includes maintaining the station’s equipment, and he occasionally travels to transmitter and translator sites with a field engineer, especially in the winter.

“In case something happens, two of us can die out there,” he joked.

Because the UI owns much of the video equipment at the station, students could still have some access to portable field cameras if KUID shuts down, Freeland said. But without engineers like Segota, there’s no one to troubleshoot or fix technical problems when they arise. Students may also not have access to in-studio cameras if funding dries up.

Instructor Denise Bennett’s introduction to video production class met Thursday afternoon at the station. She gathered students in the studio in front of the large green screen and gave them instructions before they split into several groups.

Because it's early in the semester, and the class is meant for beginners, the students were becoming acquainted with the video equipment, taking test shots to make sure the cameras were working correctly.

"We're doing a small scene, and then we're going to cut it together" as a beginning project, said Nate Moore, a junior who was playing the role of videographer on Thursday.

Freeland said it's fun watching the students try out the different types of equipment. She said Bennett has them take turns on the machines so they get a feel for each of them.

Gus Simpson, also a junior, is one of the teacher's assistants in the introductory class, which he took as a student last spring.

"I spent a lot of time in this room last semester," he said of the studio with the green screen. He said the room is too small, and "we always ran out of space when producing stuff."

Freeland said the conversion to digital equipment from analog reduced the amount of free space in the studio. But it's not exactly feasible to ask for more space when the powers that be at the state level are threatening to take away the money the station needs just to survive.

Segota said the green screen - which can make it appear as if a show host is standing in front of background that's not really there - is a big attraction to tour groups, such as some young Cub Scouts who recently were fascinated by the technology.

"It was like somebody poured sugar down their throats," he said.

That excitement easily transfers from child to student to professional, Freeland said. She said it's fun to see students start out at the station and then get jobs. When they come back to visit as professionals, she said it's evident just how important KUID was to their education and their eventual careers.

"They all have good memories of where they started," she said.

Commercial Broadcasters Support Idaho Public Television

Commercial TV competes with public television in many ways, but they're lending their support to IPTV.

NewWest Boise

www.newswest.net

By: Jill Kuraitis

01/29/2010

The Idaho State Broadcasters Association today released a resolution in support of continued state funding of Idaho Public Television. ISBA Legislative Chairman, Fred Fickenwirth, General Manager, KLEW-TV, Lewiston said, "Idaho Public Television plays a vital role in the education of future broadcasters through their facilities at the University of Idaho and Idaho State University. Commercial radio and television both depend on this educated source of employees for our stations. In addition, Idaho Public Television keep our citizens up to date on the deliberations of the state legislature, adding an extra layer of education for those who vote for our lawmakers."

Resolution: "The Idaho State Broadcasters Association supports state funding for Idaho Public Television because of the critical services Idaho Public Television provides to the citizens of Idaho. The ISBA recognizes Idaho Public Television's unique ability to reach all parts of the state, offering even the most rural citizens access to vital broadcast resources. Idaho Public Television's programming and services complement the commercial services offered by other ISBA members, providing coverage and feeds from state government activities, statewide

Emergency Alert Services, and pre-school through adult educational services. Idaho Public Television also serves a vital broadcast student training role in conjunction with the University of Idaho and Idaho State University. These facilities play a central role in the education of Idaho's future broadcasters.

The ISBA encourages continued state financial support for the infrastructure and related administration needed to maintain Idaho Public Television's statewide activities."

Taking a look at IdahoPTV

Published: Friday, January 29, 2010 10:52 PM MST

Is there a future for Sesame Street in Idaho?

Rexburg Standard

By Nate Sunderland

Many locally and throughout the state hope so. In the past week, Idaho residents have banded together in opposition of Gov. C.L "Butch" Otter's plan to phase out all state funding for Idaho Public Television.

In the upper valley, many people are reacting negatively to Otter's plan to cut \$1.6 million from IPTV over the next four years.

In a random polling of 30 people in Rexburg, 83 percent told the Standard Journal that they did not agree with Otter's plan to eliminate funding to IPTV. And the Standard Journal's online poll, which received 91 votes through Friday afternoon, 59 percent said they also disagreed with Otter's plan.

"Its got a lot of good programming on it that you can't get through other cable -- it's important," said Wylette Stewart of Rexburg, who participated in our poll.

Ron Weekes, a professor at Brigham Young University-Idaho who specializes in broadcasting and who has worked nationally for public television, says that funding for IPTV is important because it provides a unique service.

"I think (public television) has a positive effect on our culture, the reason being that the programming on public television -- both on local stations and on national public television -- can't be found on your commercial television networks," said Weekes. He said he didn't think that much of the content found on public television would be marketable on a commercial station.

People across the state are saying the same things -- that Idaho Public Television offers all Idahoans a unique product. One group, Friends of IPTV, has mounted a Web campaign to oppose Otter's plan.

"The people of Idaho have devoted significant resources over a long period of time to build a statewide IPTV system that is able to provide tremendous value to Idahoans and reach every corner of the state, particularly the rural areas of Idaho that often receive too little attention," said former Superintendent of Public Education Jerry Evans, who represents the campaign.

"While we all appreciate the significant budget pressure faced by the Legislature, we don't believe the proposed phase out of state support will serve the long-term best interests of Idahoans."

Friends of IPTV is encouraging all Idaho residents to contact their legislators to express their concerns.

But despite the strong opposition, is there some merit to Otter's plan?

Otter has said that IPTV should not be supported by the government but rather be driven by the market. According to The Associated Press, Otter said, "'Government TV' has outlived the day when it was needed to connect Idaho's disparate northern, southern and eastern reaches divided by geography and culture."

When the Corporation for Public Broadcasting was created by the federal government in 1967 to introduce public television, its primary purpose was transmitting educational and cultural resources, and the support of public telecommunications for the local and federal government.

But in an age where access to educational resources is readily on the Internet, and nearly every government agency has a Web site, is Idaho Public Television even useful for the general population with tools like the Internet being so readily available?

Several of those polled by the Standard Journal didn't think so and expressed some anger at using taxpayer money for the stations. Others said they were "OK" with Otter's cuts simply because they didn't watch public television.

But regardless of whether its useful or even widely used by Idahoans, if Otter's plan goes forward it will have a significant impact in Idaho. His plan calls for cuts of approximately \$380,000 per year. The results, according to The Associated Press, would trim IPTV's coverage by almost 300,000 Idahoans as rural broadcast towers are dismantled and smaller IPTV stations are closed. And if even one of the five IPTV stations is closed, it could mean dozens of lost jobs.

So what are the options?

It's common knowledge that the state budget is tight and that cuts are going to be made.

One suggestion was made by Republican State Sen. Jeff Siddoway, R-Terreton, during a Joint Finance - Appropriations Committee meeting on the subject on Wednesday. He suggested that the station sell commercial spots.

However, Siddoway's idea was shot down because federal law prohibits public television stations from selling commercial advertising.

According to Weekes, one idea might be a fee increase for underwriting credits.

Slightly different than commercial advertising, an underwriting credit refers to a financial sponsorship of a program or televised event in which an organization pays for a portion of IPTV's service in exchange for a mention of their product or service.

Weekes says that for the present time, public television all across the nation still fills an important role.

"PBS, besides providing entertainment, provides a great educational resource for our children and grandchildren," said Weekes. "The governor is already cutting education and I'd hate to see him cut public television, just for the educational factor."

In addition to state funding, IPTV also receives funding from donors through fundraisers, as well as large grants from the federal government.

Gov. Otter's initiatives are foundering on the details

Times-News Editorial Board

January 28, 2010

Twin Falls Times-News

Has there ever been an Idaho elected official with better people skills than Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter? We can't think of one. Otter's down-home, self-effacing charm is among his greatest assets as a politician and a leader. So why isn't he more successful in advancing his agenda?

For two years, the Republican governor tried to persuade an overwhelmingly Republican Legislature to approve a package of funding to repair Idaho's roads. He failed.

And now Otter's proposal to eliminate seven state agencies - Idaho Public Television, the Human Rights Commission, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Independent Living Council, the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Digital Learning Academy - by phasing out their funding is running into heavy opposition.

Some of it was inevitable, but the governor failed to make a case for why these agencies should go and what should happen to the services they provide and the clients they serve. If he has a vision for what leaner state government should look like, he hasn't stated it.

So others drove the debate. Lawmakers have been inundated with pleas to rescue IPTV, especially since the first round of cuts would likely jeopardize service to rural areas.

And last week's announcement that the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation would survive despite the fact that Otter wanted to zero out its budget came in the wake of a statewide outcry that the governor seemed to misjudge. Worse, the initiative to save the department came not from Otter but from IDPR Director Nancy Merrill and public officials and community leaders in the Magic Valley trying to head off the closure of Thousand Springs State Park.

Of the other agencies on the chopping block, the future of just one has been decided. The Human Rights Commission will likely be folded into the Department of Labor.

But the governor may not get his way with the rest, especially IPTV. By not putting forward a plan for what IPTV would look like if privatized, he conceded the advantage to those who want to keep public television public.

Otter excels at articulating what government should and should not do. His problem is closing the sale.

IPTV manager sounds warning about a rural blackout

PostRegister.com

Thursday, January 28, 2010

Peter Morrill says rural Idahoans will lose their access and three channels will be cut if the agency's funding is eliminated.

By Nick Draper

BOISE -- Idaho Public Television could quit broadcasting to rural Idaho and discontinue three channels if taxpayer funding is removed from the agency's budget.

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter has proposed phasing out state general funding for IPTV over four years, starting with \$387,000 when fiscal year 2011 starts July 1.

Otter has said he wants IPTV to be operated like a self-sustaining business and rely on viewer contributions and federal funding to pay for its operations.

But Peter Morrill, IPTV's general manager, told the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee on Wednesday that losing taxpayer support, which makes up a quarter of IPTV's overall budget, will come with consequences.

"These (general) funds are some of the most difficult funds to replace," Morrill said during his budget presentation to JFAC, the Legislature's budget-writing body. "We would have to focus our services more on the population centers of the state."

Public television probably would remain on the air in heavily populated areas, such as Idaho Falls, Pocatello and Boise.

If the Legislature follows Otter's recommendation, though, several cuts would have to take place:

Forty-one of IPTV's 42 repeaters would no longer broadcast programming to rural parts of the state, including the programming provided by the device on Menan Butte.

About one-third of the IPTV staff, or 20 employees, would be laid off.

From \$1 million to \$2 million would have to be paid back to the federal government, which provided grants for rural equipment that would no longer be in use.

The station's Learn/ Create Channel, World Channel and 24-hour Kids and Families Channel would be canceled.

"Three of our channels would go away," Morrill said.

At a news conference after his State of the State address, Otter said dwindling tax revenue prompted him to recommend cutting general-fund spending to IPTV. But he also said it has enough viewers to financially support its operation.

"It has a lot of value, and I think it has a lot of constituency that is willing to support it," Otter said Jan 11.

Morrill, however, told JFAC that his agency already tries to obtain as many federal grants and viewer contributions as it can.

"We don't think we've left too much money on the table," Morrill said. "We've not been doing a slacker job."

JFAC, and the Legislature as a whole, won't decide IPTV's fate until later this session, but many eastern Idaho residents have already weighed in on the issue to their elected officials.

Sen. Dean Mortimer and Rep. Erik Simpson, both Idaho Falls Republicans, said they've received numerous e-mails from constituents saying not to alter IPTV's funding structure.

Mortimer, who sits on JFAC, doesn't have a stance yet on the IPTV issue, although he said he doesn't like the idea of eliminating rural programming.

"I would be concerned about that," he said.

Who We Are

January 27, 2010

By Senator Nicole LaFavor

Today Peter Morrill from Idaho Public Television came before JFAC to present his budget. Peter is a tall man whose voice I'm sure you'd know: gentle, warm, phenomenally reassuring. Everything will be fine. Everything will be fine.

Yet Morrill had to set out before us the 33% reduction in funding that the Governor has directed. He was gracious and clear in the face of Otter's proposal to, over 4 years, phase out all funding for Public Television.

He gently reminded us that, no, Public Television with its public funding, can not just start selling commercial advertisements like any TV station to make up the \$1.6 Million dollars in lost funds. And will a few more weeks of telethons in this economic environment make up the funds? No.

Do we forget, if we don't ponder the question, that Idaho Public Television is the only Idaho owned TV station in the state? Might it have been awhile since we watched the award winning programs exploring our own Idaho history, our heroes, our unique issues, this place with its canyons, deserts, forests, farms and mountains -- everything that is so uniquely us as Idahoans.

Listening to Peter Morrill today I felt odd pride for the station that is in essence our voice. It is indeed as Peter said, one of the few things we have in common as a state. Public Television is of by and for us as a people. What state would give that up?

Comments:

Peter is a pioneer a great broadcaster (with a wonderful calming voice) who in thick and thin (budgets) has helped make public broadcasting in Idaho... something very special.. we all owe Peter a big thank you for his service.

Michael B. Lish

Idaho Falls ,now retired fellow Idaho radio broadcaster

KLCE,KACH,KBLI,KID,KRXK etc. also TV work ,various duties at KIFI

Idaho Public Television Gives Budget Presentation: Legislators ask about alternatives

NewWest-Boise

By: Sharon Fisher, www.newwest.net

1/27/10

The other shoe—the size of Big Bird's—dropped in the Idaho Legislature as Idaho Public Television General Manager Peter Morrill gave his budget presentation to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC), two and a half weeks after a budget recommendation that would phase out general funding support for the statewide television network after four years.

"I have a great deal of respect for the difficult decisions the Governor has had to make and propose to this deliberative body," Morrill said. "And there is an enormous amount of respect we have for the process you have to go through to understand the needs and wants, and try to guide this state to fiscal solvency." But the long and the short of it is, without a new source of replacement funding, the station would have to let 41 of its 42 translator stations (with the exception of Lewiston) go dark, he said. The translator stations are what brings Idaho Public Television to rural Idaho.

The battle to save Idaho Public Television has spawned a nonprofit group, Save Idaho Public Television, with its own Facebook page, up to 3,441 members as of this writing, as well as numerous written statements, both pro and con, and journalistic pieces that span party lines and regional barriers.

So many people showed up at the budget hearing—wearing big yellow Big Bird feathers to show their support, according to the Boise Weekly's Nathaniel Hoffman—that they were encouraged to go to an overflow room to hear the presentation. Several members of JFAC, especially those in the rural areas most likely to be hit hardest by a phaseout, alluded to having received a great deal of constituent comment.

Part of the decorum of JFAC is that it is considered bad form to diss the budget recommendation, and Morrill skirted the line as he crisply recited the numbers in the mellifluous voice that Idaho Public Television viewers easily recognize: a more than \$500,000, or 33 percent, reduction from 2010; \$0 for replacement items; \$0 for Idaho Experience; \$0 for two people to help out with producing Legislature Live, which airs the House, Senate, and JFAC in audio and video gavel-to-gavel and, new this year, offers audio feeds of committee hearings as well.

Of particular interest to the legislative committee, of course, were Idaho Reports and Legislature Live. In the first two weeks of the legislative session, Morrill noted, more than 14,000 people had logged into Legislature Live, and 7,578 had specifically watched JFAC, he said. Legislature Live currently costs about \$195,000 to produce, including staff time and studio leasing. Idaho Reports is currently funded by the Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation—which has notified Morrill that its grant will have to be cut by 50 percent next year, due to the economic downturn—as well as by Friends of Idaho Public Television, he said. A recent feature, Capitol of Light, on the renovated Statehouse was funded largely by the Capitol Commission, as well as by Friends of Idaho Public Television and its endowment fund, he added.

As he has stated before, if the cuts are enacted, the network will most likely need to limit itself to the cities where it derives most of its revenue, such as the Treasure Valley. While it's easy to raise funds to buy programming, "it's far more challenging to specifically raise funds to keep repeater systems on in distant communities," Morrill said.

Morrill also explained to the legislators that, as a public broadcasting station, it couldn't sell commercials, sell its content to cable television or satellite broadcast, or use its government-funded equipment for commercial television production. In addition, it is already making use of grants—ironically, the station was awarded almost \$100,000 in stimulus funding, intended to help preserve jobs, earlier this month—and is ranked above its peers in its ability to raise private funds. "I don't think we've left too much money on the table," he said.

Birds of a Feather: JFAC May Not Vote on Phase Out

Boise Weekly

By: Nathaniel Hoffman

1/27/2010

Eve Chandler and Roger Grigg of the Friends of Idaho Public Television board.

Friends of Idaho Public Television filled the pews at the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee this morning sporting oversized nametags complete with a pair of yellow feathers, to indicate support for Big Bird.

IdahoPTV General Manager Peter Morrill laid out his succinct case for maintaining state support for the station, emphasizing that without state funding it would not be able to maintain 41 of its 42 rural transmitters (the Lewiston transmitter could potentially be supported). Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter has recommended a four-year phase out of state funding for the station (currently at \$1,659,800 despite the various rounded numbers you might read elsewhere at boiseweekly.com). But JFAC co-chairman Sen. Dean Cameron, a Rupert Republican, indicated after the meeting that the committee may not vote to support IdahoPTV phase out, or the phasing out of five other small commissions that Otter placed on the chopping block.

"You may see this committee not taking a stand on the phase out," Cameron said. "All of us are in support of public television, all of us want to see public television continue."

Drastic Cuts for Idaho Public Television

Posted: Jan 27, 2010 05:40 PM

KIVI-TV, Nampa, Idaho

This morning the Idaho Public Television made their case to legislative leaders asking them not to cut their funding. If they do, that means dozens of state employees will be out of work.

Governor Butch Otter wants to cut \$1.6-million dollars from state funding from the Idaho Public Television.

The governor said IPTV should not be supported by the government, instead it should be market-driven.

But IPTV made their case to the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee asking them not to pass the governor's policy.

According to the governor's plan, IPTV would lose \$380-thousand dollars every year over a 4 year period.

The general manager says that would drastically affect programming and increase the state's unemployment numbers.

"If this policy would move forward we're calculating that we're going to have to lay off approximately 1/3 of our employees or about 20 people," said the Idaho Public Television General Manager Peter Morrill.

The GM says they've already tighten their budget by \$200-thousand dollars and cut 3 full time positions.

"Right now we're down to the bone," said Morrill.

IPTV says they understand it's tough for a lot of businesses right now but they're asking the governor to take a second look before eliminating one of their main funding sources.

"That's all we're really asking for: treat us like any state agency and we can walk together through this economic downturn," said Morrill.

In the next couple of weeks J-FAC will have an opportunity to make some new recommendations to the governor and then he will make a decision on how much money will be cut.

Thousands Showing Support For Idaho Public Television

By Stuart Summers, KPVI-Pocatello

January 26, 2010

As the future of Idaho Public Television remains uncertain, one group of Idahoans is now working to ensure the network's signal is not shut off. Two weeks ago Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter recommended cutting state money for the TV network and now thousands around the Gem State are reacting to that news.

A statewide campaign known as Save Idaho Public Television is drawing a lot of support from viewers. These public television viewers are afraid to see what would happen if the state legislature approves the governor's recent recommendation.

Jerry Evans, Save Idaho Public Television: "Without state support, the opportunity to continue becomes practically impossible."

Currently Idaho Public Television receives about \$1.7 million from the state of Idaho. That money is primarily used to maintain the network's 42 translator sites that help the signal to reach nearly every corner of the state. Following the governor's announcement that IPTV may be cut from the state budget, thousands have rallied to support the media organization.

Over the weekend a Facebook group was organized and already more than three thousand people have joined.

Save Idaho Public Television has also organized a website to spread their message of concern. Efforts to gather support from around the state is leading up to this week's meeting between IPTV and the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee.

Those working to garner support for the state network say they understand the current budget crisis, but believe more can be done by the state.

Evans: "We're not asking that public television be set aside from the economic reality. What we're really asking is for the opportunity to continue with some level of state support."

If you are interested in contacting your state legislator to weigh in with your opinion, click here to visit <http://www.saveidahopublictelevision.com/>.

Speak up if you want to save Idaho Public Television

Press-Tribune Editorial board, Nampa, Idaho

January 26, 2010

Idaho Press-Tribune

Should Idaho Public Television be privatized?

That's the question on the chopping block today at the Idaho Legislature. The Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee will consider the question this morning in Boise but likely won't make the spending decision today.

Gov. Butch Otter, who has long pushed for smaller government, wants to phase out state funding for Idaho Public TV during the next four years.

That means \$1.6 million of Idaho Public TV's annual budget of \$7 million will be gone by 2014.

"Every dollar you save is a dollar more you have to put into the classroom," Otter's aides said.

This may look like a move because Idaho faces a \$50 million budget shortfall, but quite honestly, the shift to no "government TV" has been on Otter's "to cut" list for a while.

The budget deficit just sped up the process.

Otter believes there's no longer the need to connect the hinterlands of northern, southern and eastern reaches of Idaho because private networks, cable and Internet have narrowed the gaps.

On the other side of the issue is a group of donors who support public television. Friends of Idaho Public Television launched a Web site last week and wants people to contact legislators and lodge their objections to the cuts.

Should Idaho taxpayers bring Big Bird to Idaho homes each morning?

Should government be in the business of competing with the private sector?

Should jobs be slashed? Should the studios in Moscow and Pocatello be shut down? Should the remote transmitters be turned off? Without the state funding in place, supporters say service would eventually be limited to the areas of Boise, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Falls, Pocatello and maybe Twin Falls.

There is no simple answer. Every tax dollar must be spent wisely. Who is more important? What is more important? Schools or public TV?

If you don't cut public television, what do you cut instead?

Otter wants public television to find more private support. But the biggest share of the private funding comes from donors in the most populated regions. It would very difficult to find funding for the remote corners.

Otter wants to give IPTV four years to figure out its funding challenges. Should IPTV face cuts like all others? Yes.

Should a four-year phase-out plan be adopted this year?

Has this been carefully thought out? Or should Idaho make some cuts, but revisit the phase-out plan next year?

Like he's done in the cases of the Idaho Human Rights Commission and the state parks system, does the governor have a plan to unveil today that could consolidate funding, merge resources and create new partnerships?

We don't know.

But you can be sure that the fight to save Idaho Public Television will be a vicious one.

It's time to let your lawmakers know where you stand.

Friends of IPTV made it easy. Go to <http://www.saveidahopublictelevision.com/news.html> and send your lawmakers a note. Tell them what you want.

This is the time for your voice to be heard. And don't wait until it's too late. The programs we take for granted — at taxpayers' expense — could go away.

Our view is based on the majority opinions of the Idaho Press-Tribune editorial board. Members of the board are Publisher Rick V. Weaver, Managing Editor Vickie Holbrook, Assistant Managing Editor David Woolsey and community members Ann Crabb, Rodney Moore and Amy Larson, all of Nampa; Opinion Editor Phil Bridges, advertising representative Melissa Valencia and community members Brian Bishop and Mike Oke, all of Caldwell.



Empty-pocket states cutting \$23 million from pubcast support

Published in Current, Jan 25, 2010

By Dru Sefton, www.current.org

As states cut back their budgets, governors are often targeting public broadcasting along with other educational and arts programs. Some stations could face a total funding loss.

Larry Sidman, president of the Association of Public Television Stations, said states have pruned at least \$23 million from public TV funding this fiscal year. More reductions are expected.

The National Association of State Budget Officers predicts that governors will face daunting choices at least through fiscal 2012. "Generally speaking, nearly all states are struggling right now," the group's director of fiscal studies, Brian Sigritz, told Current. The nonpartisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities sees overall state shortfalls of \$350 billion nationwide over the next two years.

All this is frightening news for stations. According to CPB, more than 95 percent of pubTV stations and 77 percent of pubradio stations receive some kind of support directly from a state government or indirectly from a state college or university.

Proposed in Idaho: to zero in 4 years

IdahoPTV stands to lose all state funding. The state-operated network's \$7 million budget counts on nearly \$2 million from the state. If Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's proposed budget passes, that support would drop to zero in equal steps over the next four years. General Manager Peter Morrill announced that cuts would require laying off 19 staffers, closing three studios and discontinuing maintenance of 39 of the network's 40 rural translators and translator relays.

Morrill will go to the legislature Jan. 27 with a case for it to assist the network and a list of cutbacks if it chooses not to. The state net is one of several Idaho government entities that could lose all state support, including the Developmental Disabilities Council, the Human Rights Commission and the Digital Learning Academy, a web-based educational program.

Otter, a Republican, not only regards IdahoPTV as "government TV," whose day has passed, according to the Idaho Statesman, but he's also devoted to restraining the state budget while the Democrats in the legislature contend that he's ignoring tax revenue gains that they expect from economic recovery.

IdahoPTV's state support is specifically for the transmission of services and other basics, including rent, the state audit's cost and pay for 11 staffers from field technicians to the network's CFO. "Clearly, there are not too many of those functions we can do without," he added.

If the governor gets his way, Morrill is also considering concentrating services and spending in southwest Idaho—around Boise, the capital and largest city—where the network has the best chance for increased private-sector support: Some 82 percent of the station's \$2.9 million individual and corporate contributions originate there. The proposed budget was still in a joint legislative committee last week. Morrill expects network funding will be up for consideration late in February, with the legislature sending an appropriation bill to the governor soon after.

Morrill tries to remain hopeful. "We've certainly had good support in the legislature over the past 10 years, particularly during the transition to DTV." He expects the value of public TV to be "rigorously debated" in the coming months as the funding bill moves from committee to the full legislature.

In other states:

Miles: "I pray a lot"

Pennsylvania pubTV stations: The state's independently operated stations are still reeling from earlier devastating news from Harrisburg: Their state aid was set to decline from \$8 million to \$1 million, split among eight stations. Then, this month, they got more bad news: The \$1 million has now been halved. And the checks have been delayed. "I pray a lot," said WQED Multimedia President George Miles. Last year the Pittsburgh station got more than \$1 million from the state for its \$16 million budget. It had about 130 staffers; now it has 91. And there's no money for travel and reduced amounts for content production and employee pensions. Miles took a 30 percent salary cut. "We watch cash on a daily basis," he said.

Louisiana Public Broadcasting: Gov. Bobby Jindal will lock in his proposed budget Feb. 12. He's working against projected shortfalls over the next two years of up to \$3 billion as federal stimulus funds disappear. Jindal originally favored a 23 percent cutback for the network, but ultimately proposed 18 percent. The state is providing \$9.3 million of LPB's \$13 million budget this year. LPB President Beth Courtney said the Louisiana commissioner of administration — the state's CFO — told her to look at the situation not as a cut, but "an opportunity for you to change to self-generated means of support." She noted: "I'd have to pledge every day for the next year" to come out even. The legislature must approve its budget before it recesses June 21.

Indiana Public Broadcasting Stations: Lloyd Wright, president of WFYI in Indianapolis, said that Gov. Mitch Daniels' biennial budget proposal last year would cut all of the \$3.5 million in state aid to the state's separately owned stations, eight in radio and eight in TV. After "contentious" debate, Wright said, the legislature decided to cut \$300,000 instead. "That was encouraging," he added. But on Jan. 7 Wright received a letter from the state budget director saying that appropriation will now be halved. And this is the recommendation of a governor who has publicly said he watches and listens to public broadcasting. WFYI's \$9.2 million budget, which topped \$10 million not long ago, gets a state government influx of less than 6 percent. Roger Rhodes, executive director of the stations' statewide organization, said he is hearing of looming service cuts statewide. "It's unrealistic to think we can go forward with a 50 percent cut and maintain services at current levels."

Alabama Public Television: A \$7.5 million appropriation makes up 41 percent of the state-operated network's \$18.3 million operating budget, said network CFO Pauline Howland. That funding is down 34 percent since fiscal year 2008. "The governor's recommendation for state support of APT is only \$250,000 more than FY98, so we've lost nearly 13 years of growth in state support," she said. Last year's cuts prompted the station to end its 25-year On the Record program and lay off four employees. The station won't know final numbers until the governor signs the next fiscal year's budget, probably in May.

Iowa Public Television: Iowa's state-owned network receives nearly half of its \$17 million budget from the state. All state agencies this fiscal year have already absorbed 10 percent cuts—even the legislature itself, which trimmed the length of its session, according to Jennifer Konfrst, network communications manager. Network staff furloughs of up to a week saved \$107,000, which disappeared promptly into the state's general fund. The station has stopped broadcasting overnight. It hopes early retirements and attrition will reduce staff by eight spots. Next fiscal year is "not looking any better," Konfrst said.

Flashes of good budget news seldom compensate for the losses. CPB this month gave stations checks totalling \$22 million from a special "fiscal stabilization" appropriation tucked into a big federal spending bill last month. When IdahoPTV received its \$97,000 share, Morrill called it "a godsend for us at this moment." In Indianapolis, WFYI had a successful \$21.8 million capital drive that allowed it to move into a larger building with space for rent-paying tenants. In Alabama, several corporate sponsors that had dropped away have now returned.

And there's still help from Washington. "APTS is very much aware of the draconian cuts that many stations across the country are experiencing in state funding," Sidman told Current. "APTS is working with public broadcasting stations to explore the most effective means to alleviate this situation."

IPTV can't sell commercials in lieu of state cash

The Associated Press

Published: 01/27/10

BOISE, Idaho ‹ Lawmakers writing the 2011 budget questioned Idaho Public Television's top official about how Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's plan to eliminate state funding will affect his system's reach to rural areas.

General Manager Peter Morrill told the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee Wednesday the station would concentrate on urban areas near Boise, Pocatello, Idaho Falls, Coeur d'Alene and Twin Falls, not outlying regions where service is now subsidized by Idaho taxpayers.

Sen. Jeff Siddoway, a Republican from Terreton, wanted to know if Morrill could sell commercials to cover \$1.6 million in state cash his station stands to lose by 2014, under Otter's plan.

Morrill said federal law precludes public TV stations from such activities.

Otter contends the age of cable TV and ubiquitous Internet has eliminated the need for a state-funded public TV system, especially when other agencies like public schools are clamoring for money, too.

Commercials on IPTV? Ah, no

www.current.org

Jan 27, 2010

Peter Morrill, g.m. of IdahoPTV, appeared before the joint state finance-appropriation committee today in an attempt to persuade members against phasing out all funding over the next four years. One question, from Sen. Jeff Siddoway, a Republican from Terreton: Why doesn't IPTV just sell commercials instead of taking state money? Because federal law prohibits that, Morrill explained.

Lawmakers leery of removing IPTV funding

Betsy Z. Russell The Spokesman-Review

January 27, 2010



Peter Morrill, general manager of Idaho Public Television, begins his budget presentation to lawmakers on Wednesday. IPTV receives only about \$1.6 million a year from the state, getting most of its funding from private donations and federal grants, but Gov. Butch Otter is calling for phasing out the state funding entirely over the next four years.

BOISE - Idaho lawmakers on a key budget-setting committee were decidedly unenthusiastic Wednesday about Gov. Butch Otter's proposal to phase out all state funding for Idaho Public Television over the next four years.

"I just don't see this committee doing that," said Sen. Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, the co-chairman of the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee. "We're not going to fund based on what we think is going to happen the next year or the year after that. ... They're going to be subject to the same level of reduction as everyone else."

Rep. Maxine Bell, R-Jerome, the panel's other co-chair, said, "It's my personal feeling that they're part of the education system." Without state funding, she said, the system couldn't serve all of Idaho's rural areas.

Idaho Public Television General Manager Peter Morrill made his budget presentation to the joint committee on Wednesday, and went over what the governor's proposal would mean - pulling back from a statewide, "public service" model for the public TV network to a "market-driven" model that would focus on the state's biggest-population areas, source of the vast majority of its private donations.

IPTV gets just a quarter of its funding from the state. The rest comes from private donations and federal grants, and 82 percent of the donations come from the Boise area, the state's largest population center.

Lawmakers on the joint budget committee said they've been deluged with calls and emails asking them not to cut out state funding for Idaho Public Television. "Nobody wants us to eliminate funding for public television," said Sen. Joyce Broadsword, R-Sagle.

Sen. Shawn Keough, R-Sandpoint, said her constituents have been asking her "not to cut it - to find someplace else to cut." Said Sen. Jim Hammond, R-Post Falls, "The only emails I'm getting from my constituents are in support of public TV."

Sen. Bert Brackett, R-Rogerson, said, "There's a lot of support out there, but we have to weigh it against the other needs and wants of the state."

Lawmakers are a bit miffed at taking the heat over the proposal, at a time when they're all up for election. "It's pretty hard to go home and tell someone that your grandbaby isn't going to be able to watch Sesame Street any more - maybe if you move to Boise," said Rep. Wendy Jaquet, D-Ketchum. "I don't think the committee will have the stomach to do that."

Keough said she'd like to see IPTV officials try more fundraising in rural areas, and not just give up on them. She noted that Sandpoint residents raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to help area residents who were ill, and the community came together to save the local Panida Theater.

"I'd like to see a little more aggressive effort before they wrote rural Idaho off," she said.

Bell said she hopes Morrill and his team get together with Otter and talk about "business plans," as state Parks Director Nancy Merrill did, prompting Otter to drop his "conceptual" proposal to eliminate the state Parks Department.

"I have a little ray of hope that they're working with the governor's office to try and find a business plan that may be more to his liking," she said.

But Morrill said he's not yet identified a "statue of liberty play" to make up for the network's \$1.66 million in annual state funding.

The governor's proposed budget for Idaho Public TV for next year is just \$1.1 million in state general funds, a reduction of \$550,700, 33 percent.

Boise State Radio – NPR

<http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/idaho/news.newsmain/article/0/0/1604760/Top.Stories/3..3.Questions.Ahh.Ahh.Ahh>

BOISE (Idaho) - Today Idaho Public Television goes before the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee. They'll try to make the case for why they should continue to get state funding, and not be cut off entirely (over a four year period) as Governor Butch Otter recommended. The public TV crowd will no doubt get some tough questions about relevance and why they deserve tax payer money when the state's financial situation is so dire. Boise State Radio's Adam Cotterell decided to take some of those questions to the people of the Treasure Valley.

Lawmakers say constituents are telling them to support Idaho Public TV, not cut funds

Spokesman Review

January 27, 2010

By Betsy Russell

Lawmakers say they've been deluged with calls and emails asking them not to cut out state funding for Idaho Public Television. "There's a lot of support out there, but we have to weigh it against the other needs and wants of the state," said Sen. Bert Brackett, R-Rogerson. Said Sen. Joyce Broadsword, R-Sagle, "Nobody wants us to eliminate funding for public television." Sen. Shawn Keough, R-Sandpoint, said her constituents have been asking her "not to cut it - to find someplace else to cut." Said Sen. Jim Hammond, R-Post Falls, "The only emails I'm getting from my constituents are in support of public TV."

Rep. Shirley Ringo, D-Moscow, said, "I think we've all gotten hundreds of messages to support public TV." Said Rep. Wendy Jaquet, D-Ketchum, said, "It's pretty hard to go home and tell someone that your grandbaby isn't going to be able to watch Sesame Street any more - maybe if you move to Boise. I don't think the committee will have the stomach to do that."

Why they can't just put on commercials

Eye On Boise, Spokesman Review Blog

Posted at 10:12 a.m. on January 27

Sen. Jeff Siddoway, R-Terreton, asked IPTV head Peter Morrill, "Could you just do regular commercial advertisements like any other television station?" Morrill noted that IPTV raises more private money than many of its peer networks. But, he said, "Idaho Public Television is licensed by the Federal Communications Commission to be a noncommercial, educational entity. We are precluded by federal law to air commercials. IPTV is also precluded by federal law from getting paid to offer its signal to cable and satellite providers, and must offer it for free; and is precluded from selling its airtime. In addition, the state owns its assets, so our ability to get into the commercial television business, what we would call competing with private industry, there probably are significant limitations there because of those issues."

Morrill said he's not identified "any Statue of Liberty play from Roger Madsen and the Department of Labor to potentially assist us with this challenge and potentially replacing that kind of money."

Sen. Brackett asks if he can go on TV

10:07 a.m. on January 27 Comments

Sen. Bert Brackett, R-Rogerson, asked IPTV General Manager Peter Morrill if he'd be allowed to come on IPTV to advocate for or against funding. "We really haven't produced any TV programs about the funding issue for Idaho Public Television," Morrill responded. "If we were to produce such a program, I would imagine you could be invited to be on the program." Brackett then criticized Idaho Public Television for allowing legislators to come on its shows and express opinions, including about funding IPTV. "I think your programming can and does stand on its own merits," Brackett said.

"But when individual legislators come on to advocate, I wonder if that gives them a political advantage." Responded JFAC Co-Chair Maxine Bell, R-Jerome, "Thank you, senator, I think that was a comment" rather than a question for Morrill.

Would have to focus on more populated part of state

at 9:53 a.m. on January 27

The governor's proposed budget for Idaho Public TV for next year is just \$1.1 million in state general funds, down from \$1.66 million this year. That's a reduction of \$550,700, "or minus 33 percent," IPTV General Manager Peter Morrill told lawmakers. The governor proposes a four-year phaseout of all general funds.

Rep. George Eskridge, R-Dover, said, "I've been getting a lot of input from a lot of sources on the proposed cuts. My question would be, if this cut goes through, the loss of general funds what's the impact on districts like mine that's for the most part rural?" Morrill responded that the state funding, about 25 percent of IPTV's budget, goes to "the maintenance of that statewide delivery system." That's the toughest kind of funding to replace, Morrill said, because it's easier to raise money for a specific TV show than for equipment to extend service to far-flung, sparsely populated areas. As a result, he said, IPTV would need to move from a public-service model to a more market-driven model. "We would have to focus on really our service to the more populated part of the state," Morrill said.

Morrill: Idaho Public Television only medium that serves whole state

Posted by Betsy Russell at 9:42 a.m. on January 27

Peter Morrill, general manager of Idaho Public Television, told legislative budget writers, "There is no statewide newspaper, there is no statewide radio system, there is no statewide commercial television." There is just Idaho Public Television, when it comes to a statewide medium that links the whole state. "We're the only locally owned and operated television network left," he noted. IPTV also is the only provider of statewide emergency alerts. The public TV network is under the magnifying glass this year because Gov. Butch Otter has proposed phasing out all its state funding over the next four years. Most of IPTV's funding already comes from private donors and federal grants, but the state money pays for the network of translators and transmitters that carries the signals throughout the state, including far-flung rural areas.

On the road in Shoshone, Otter offers hope for recovery, defends budget cuts

Idaho Statesman

By Dan Popkey - dpopkey@idahostatesman.com

Published: 01/27/10

SHOSHONE - Gov. Butch Otter got an earful from rural Idaho Wednesday - fielding questions about budget cuts, vole infestations, higher utility bills, fears of flooding, hunger, unaffordable health care and taxes.

"It just seems like no matter how hard we try, it just keeps getting tougher and tougher," said John Uhrig, a rancher and horse trainer from Shoshone. "I'm looking for that little bit of advice, that little bit of encouragement that says, 'Yes, we're all in this together.'"

Otter told Uhrig and others at his 36th Capitol for a Day that Idaho's best hope is unity. "We gotta realize that the only way we're going to get through this is working together, that we are a family, but we just happen to be a family of a million-and-a-half people."

Questioned by Vernon Johnson of Shoshone, Otter defended his decision to cut the state's \$1.6 million in support for Idaho Public Television.

"I don't mind hearing from you, 'Don't cut PBS.' But I need you to go a little bit further. What should I cut then?"

Johnson replied that he favored increases in beer and wine taxes rejected by the Legislature last year. Replied Otter, "I think any tax increase is not going to have much of chance. I hear absolutely no appetite for raising any taxes."

Otter said he's focused on consolidating state services and investing as much as possible in education and economic development to "continue to build a world-class workforce."

"I don't know what else we can do," Otter said, citing 9.1 percent unemployment and a record 180,000 Idahoans receiving food stamps.

"What we do have is the will to make this thing work, the will to help each other, everybody, get through this economic downturn," Otter said. "So when that bright day comes, we're going to leap out of this, not just crawl out of it."

Ray McClure of Shoshone credited Otter for doing a good job, noting Otter's bringing two dozen top state officials to Shoshone for the day to take questions. "I like the plethora of ties and ladies dresses up there," he said, referring to a string of tables at the Shoshone Community Center peopled by Otter aides.

But McClure said government is intruding too deeply. "I don,t want to be taxed by the government because I have a beer, or because I want to buy a bullet, or because I want to have a '73 Dodge Charger that only gets four miles to the gallon."

McClure called for term limits and mentioned Keith Allred, the Democrat seeking to unseat the Republican Otter, who has been a top elected official since 1987, serving as lieutenant governor, congressman and governor.

"I just think people are ready for change," McClure.

Otter said he recognized that every incumbent is at risk in 2010. "There's just a general frustration with government." But he added, "We do care what you say, we do care how you feel. That's why we're here."



Idaho Public Television is Government Waste

www.Newwest.net

GUEST OPINION

The arguments once used to validate the existence of taxpayer-subsidized government television no longer hold true.

By Guest Writer, 1-27-10

Imagine, if you will, a brand new state called Idaho, born in the year 2010. What government services should this new state offer? Would this new 21st century government really include a taxpayer-funded television network? Probably not, and the reason is simple: It's not needed. That's why Idaho Public Television is included as an example of government waste in our 2010 Idaho Pork Report.

The arguments once used to validate the existence of taxpayer-subsidized government television no longer hold true. For example, in the past, supporters of Idaho Public Television could argue that if not for Idaho Public Television, Idahoans would not have access to educational television programming. Not so any more. Any number of television channels offer hordes of educational choices. Cooking, science, the arts and academics all have their own channels.

Years ago, supporters of Idaho Public Television claimed that if not for the taxpayer-subsidized channel, viewers in rural parts of the state could not access television programming, and that the people in the north were disconnected from the south, and vice versa. That's also not true anymore.

Thanks to technology, rural areas and urban areas alike have access to many of the same television signals, either through cable or satellite.

Years ago, supporters of Idaho Public Television claimed that if not for Idaho Public Television, Idahoans would be deprived access to important, life-enhancing information. The Internet has clearly negated that argument. Indeed, many people are opting to download and watch on their computers content that was once exclusively television programming.

There are additional considerations worth noting: If the Legislature contends that it is a compelling state government interest to run a television station, is the state negligent when it fails to provide each Idahoan a television on which to view the television signal they've dutifully paid for?

If the Legislature contends that every Idahoan needs access to a state television signal, why is the state deciding what information is offered via that television signal? In other words, why not rebroadcast the quality educational programming being offered already by commercial television outlets?

Why must the government create and control the content, and why must that government content then be used to compete against the private sector?

And finally, if the Legislature contends that access to information is the most important reason for having taxpayer funding for Idaho Public Television, can the Legislature really argue that Idaho Public Television is really the single best vehicle for the dissemination of information, especially in light of all the other available technologies—including those that were not available in 1965 when the broadcaster was created?

Idaho Public Television does a great job. But it's a job that would receive no taxpayer support were it brand new in 2010. And that's the lens through which lawmakers should view the decision of whether to fund it going forward.

Wayne Hoffman is an Idaho registered lobbyist and executive director of the Idaho Freedom Foundation.

Comment By EMC, 1-27-10

Funding of Public Television broadcasting is truly worthy of debate. For those willing and able to pay for cable/satellite programming, many choices are available. But, Cable TV continues to slide down into the "reality" show, info-tainment gutter. The nature of programming for profit is a race to the lowest common denominator. There are no commercial equivalents to PBS's Nova, Charlie Rose, Sesame Street or other quality programming. I don't know what the long term answer is, but, Fox News and the E! Network are no substitute.

Comment By Smithhammer, 1-27-10

The arguments used to validate the subsidization of many industries by the state are frequently thin arguments to begin with. There are all sorts of business subsidies (or corporate welfare, depending on your POV) which are highly suspect in justification, many of which only survive because few people are aware of them and/or they have powerful lobbies behind them.

My initial reaction when I heard of this decision is that public television is something that many in our overwhelming conservative state government have wanted to see on the chopping block for some time, and they now have the economic justification to do so.

And I would have to agree with the comment above that the offerings of cable tv are hardly a substitute. The "quality educational programming being offered already by commercial television outlets" is a statement rife with irony.

Personally, I'd rather see my tax money going into supporting something like public television than into boodogles like the \$400k the state has committed to researching rebuilding the Teton Dam. Talk about waste.

Comment By sharon fisher, 1-27-10

"Years ago, supporters of Idaho Public Television claimed that if not for Idaho Public Television, Idahoans would be deprived access to important, life-enhancing information. The Internet has clearly negated that argument. Indeed, many people are opting to download and watch on their computers content that was once exclusively television programming."

How many people in rural areas have access to the Internet, particularly of a high enough bandwidth to watch television?

Comment By Andrew Studley, 1-27-10

Mr. Hoffman, which station should I watch to see the Idaho legislature's debates and votes? You refer to "educational" programming on national channels, most of which has little relevance to rural Idaho.

You argue that there are "many stations" that carry educational programming. While that may be true where you live, most of Idaho is not well served by cable television companies and broadband providers. Recent efforts to improve that have spent a lot of money for rather little additional connectivity (and led to at least one lawsuit against the state.)

In the long run, yes, suitable high-speed communications may make the broadcasting equipment used by IPT redundant. But the cameras, microphones, and other front-end equipment will still be needed. I don't think, given the stated purposes of his foundation, that Mr. Hoffman trusts the government farther than we can keep an eye on them. To the extent that IPT is helping us do so, it is indeed fulfilling an important purpose.

Pocatello's Idaho Public TV Fears Closure

By Michelle Costa, KIFI-Idaho Falls

January 26, 2010

POCATELLO - The future of Idaho Public Television remains up in the air, after a proposal by Governor Otter to eliminate their annual \$1.6 million in state funding over the next four years.

On Wednesday, the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee will meet to consider the proposed phase out of state funding for Idaho Public TV.

A group of donors who support Idaho Public Television are mounting a campaign to try to save the network's state funding.

The Governor said the network should find money from private sources. But, that isn't easy in rural Idaho.

Over the years, KISU, Public TV, bought this new equipment and updated to broadcast digital, adding up to around \$20 million.

But, if Governor Otter's recommendation passes, all of this gear might go to waste and the Pocatello studio would likely be the first cut.

"It's really scary and it's really sad," said Annette Stebbins, KISU, Station Manager.

The words of KISU's Station Manager, Annette Stebbins, is praying Public TV funding won't be cut and that all five local employees will still have a job.

"What we hope will happen is that they will not cut the budget for us and it will be able to stay here and help with the University and stay active in the community. I don't think anybody that has children hasn't watched "Sesame Street." My son learned how to count with the count and I'm sure others did. Big Bird has been long since a part of every day life," said Stebbins.

Since hearing the news of a proposed cut, Stebbins has been answering a lot of phone calls from those worried about Public TV's future.

For local viewers, keeping Public TV is a matter of opinion.

"I'm kind of disappointed. Idaho Public TV is one of our favorite channels. We really like the programming that they have," said Nathan Vinson, Supports Idaho PTV.

"We currently don't watch Public TV right now. We currently have a satellite system," said Jeff Pahl, doesn't watch Idaho PTV.

"I think it's a good option instead of cable and it needs to keep running like it is," said Russell Baker, Watches Idaho PTV.

As Stebbins shows off a new studio, she's crossing her fingers it will still be up and running in the future.

"Our budget, the \$1.6 million that is funded by the State, the only thing that that actually covers is transmitter fees and administrative costs. The rest comes from public and private support," said Stebbins.

And, it's those people that Idaho Public TV is reaching out to.

Students at ISU could be hurt, too. Idaho State University students use this studio to get hands-on experience every Thursday.

Log onto www.saveidahopublictelevision.com to find out more about the efforts to continue state funding of Public TV.

And, also, we want to know what you think about the future of Idaho Public Television, take part in our poll.

Northwest Public Radio to make move to Murrow College of Communication

Moscow Daily News 1/26/10

Staff report

Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Washington State University announced Monday that Northwest Public Radio, the university-owned statewide network, will move to the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication on Feb. 1.

The network is under the university's information technology department. Northwest Public Radio spokesperson Mary Hawkins said after the shift the network will continue to operate as an "independent professional public radio service."

"We will continue to (offer) the same great service that listeners expect," she said.

Across the border in Idaho, the public television station in Moscow could close within the year if the Idaho Legislature approves the lean state budget Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter proposed earlier this month.

Hawkins said the reason to move Northwest Public Radio to the college had nothing to do with money.

Although, she said like any other nonprofit organization, the network depends on the support of listeners, businesses and WSU to operate. But she said, at this point the network is in a good position.

"I can't say that's not an ongoing challenge for us, but so far, so good," she said, adding the network has been "lucky" with all the continued support it has received. The network can be heard on 13 stations across Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Southern British Columbia.

Hawkins said the network has expanded over the years, and they hope to expand even more to underserved areas. She said the network also hopes to expand their programming in the future.

"We are very optimistic about our future," she said.

She said everyone is excited about the move, which makes sense in terms of their mission since Edward R. Murrow started out as a radio man.

The transition also will benefit students in the college, she said.

"Now it's a great time to make the move because what used to be a ... school is now a college," she said. "It's fabulous to get students exposed to a professional broadcasting organization."

Last fall, the public television stations KWSU and KTNW were also transferred from the university's information technology department to the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication.

Republican: Idaho Public TV should not be 'dismantled'

By Jerry Evans

Idaho Statesman

Tue, 01/26/2010

(Jerry Evans, a Republican and former state schools superintendent, is criticizing GOP Gov. Butch Otter's proposal to phase out Idaho Public Television funding.)

"IPTV should not be treated more favorably than other state agencies or be exempt from today's economic reality, but the system doesn't deserve to be dismantled," Evans said in a guest opinion issued this morning.

Evans' entire piece is below, and here's a link to my most recent blog on the mobilized campaign to rescue public TV. (Disclosure: Evans is a former Statesman editorial board community representative.)

As a longtime advocate and supporter of Idaho Public Television, I am more than troubled by Governor Otter's proposal to phase out all state support for IPTV. During my sixteen-year tenure as state superintendent of public instruction I saw firsthand how this important asset was used to enhance the curriculum and enrich classroom instruction for students across the entire state.

I also observed how public television's broad mission to educate, inform and entertain was carried to every region of our state and how critically important it became to our smaller communities and rural areas. Any thought that a more market-driven approach to raising additional private contributions could continue the statewide system is simply unrealistic. The state has made a multi-million dollar investment in the IPTV network that provides quality service for the entire gamut of our population from early childhood, to teenagers, young adults, parents and senior citizens. Even legislators, who will need to make a determination about the importance of continuing the

statewide system, make great use of IPTV. No other media organization in our large, diverse and still very rural state provides access, information, and the opportunity for all Idaho residents to participate in their state government (particularly the Legislature).

The state's current \$1.7 million contribution to public television primarily maintains the system's 42 translator sites, allowing public television to reach nearly every corner of Idaho. Without continuing state support, virtually all of these sites, providing programming to every corner of the state, will cease to operate.

The suggestion has been made that Idaho Public Television raise more private support, even though the system currently generates about 62 percent of its support from private sources — primarily thousands of Idahoans who make an annual contribution. It would be impossible to replace the loss of state financial support. An analysis of peer systems indicates that Idaho is already outperforming other public television operations in terms of its ability to gather public and corporate support.

I've been around state government a long time and I know legislators face tough decisions and many demands and it would be unrealistic to believe that IPTV can be held harmless from further holdback or budget reductions. IPTV should not be treated more favorably than other state agencies or be exempt from today's economic reality, but the system doesn't deserve to be dismantled. I do understand that every dollar can only be spent once and how each agency's budget impacts the public school appropriation, and I certainly have grave concerns there as well.

If you agree with me and thousands of other Idahoans that Idaho Public Television is — and should remain — a valuable, statewide resource, the Legislature needs to hear from you.

A website — www.saveidahopublictelevision.com — has been created by the Friends of Idaho Public Television to provide information and a quick and convenient way to let legislators know how you feel. Please take a moment and help us Save Idaho Public Television.

Jerry L. Evans, a Republican, served as Idaho's Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1979-1995. He is the volunteer spokesman for the campaign to Save Idaho Public Television.

Saving Idaho Public Television

TreasureValley.com

January 26th, 2010

Hey there! If you are new to Treasured Valley, you might want to subscribe to the RSS feed for daily updates.

One of the big issues in the Statehouse right now is that Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter wants to cut funding for Idaho Public Television which could mean that rural Idahoans could see their service significantly reduced and it could mean the end of Idaho Legislature Live (a service that the state should be providing no matter what).

Here are some links to see what everyone is saying about the proposed cuts to Idaho Public Television:

* Defunded IdahoPTV Would Cut Legislature Live as Well. Idaho Public Television has been an institution in this state since 1965. Beginning in Moscow, the organization has expanded over 40 years to reach 97 percent of Idahoans, according to its Web site. Their programming has been able to reach into even the more isolated, rural communities of the Gem State.

* I Want My IPTV. Love your Idaho Public Television? Here's your chance to show your support for continued state funding of the free channel. Friends of IdahoPTV have started a statewide campaign, aptly named Save Idaho Public Television, to show legislators the support that the organization has across the state. Organizers are asking the public to contact their legislators, especially members of the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee, by Wednesday, Jan. 27. Why so soon? That's when the committee will take its first look at Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's proposed phase-out of state funding for IdahoPTV—currently \$1.7 million per year.

* Kevin Richert: Will Idaho Public TV get the ax? Here's my best guess. Parks enthusiasts raised Cain over Gov. Butch Otter's ill-advised plan to shut down the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. On Friday, Otter blinked, patching together a plan to keep Parks and Recreation alive.

* AnchorMommy: Up on my soapbox: DON'T CUT IDAHO PUBLIC TELEVISION. I normally don't spout off much about politics here on AnchorMommy, but right now, I feel I have no choice. Something very disturbing is happening in my beautiful home state of Idaho: funding for Idaho Public Television could soon be phased out — for good.

* Why Idaho Public Television Isn't Like Oregon's. Idaho Public Television is also more efficient than most of the other public broadcasting systems to which it can be compared.

* Nonprofit encourages Idahoans to support public TV. A group of donors who support Idaho Public Television are mounting a campaign to try to save the network's state funding. Friends of Idaho Public Television launched a Web site last weekend asking Idahoans to contact their legislators and members of the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee.

* The hidden costs of budget cuts...: Idaho is discovering the hidden costs of budget cuts, as major cutbacks in the state budget threaten to cost more than they'll save. One example: The \$1.6 million the state would save by cutting off funding for Idaho Public Television may be less than the amount IPTV has to repay the federal government for portions of \$4 million in grants.

Ironically, you can watch the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) discuss the proposed cuts live online tomorrow, Wednesday the 27th on Idaho Public Television's Legislature Live website.

Save Idaho Public Television on Facebook.

Idaho Public Television on Facebook | Twitter.

Idaho Reports on Facebook | Twitter | YouTube

Dialog on Facebook | Twitter | YouTube

Lewiston Tribune On-Line Poll –

January 26, 2010

Poll Results: Idaho Public TV

When it comes to funding Idaho Public Television I think ...

It should continue to be funded by the state at current levels.

42% - 97 votes

It should be phased out over four years, as Gov. Otter is proposing.

4% - 9 votes

It should continue to exist but rely solely on its own fundraising to operate.

43% - 98 votes

I don't watch public television so I don't care.

11% - 25 votes

I Want My IPTV

Boise Weekly

By Deanna Darr

Mon, Jan 25, 2010 at 9:48 AM

Love your Idaho Public Television? Here's your chance to show your support for continued state funding of the free channel.

Friends of IdahoPTV have started a statewide campaign, aptly named Save Idaho Public Television, to show legislators the support that the organization has across the state. Organizers are asking the public to contact their legislators, especially members of the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee, by Wednesday, Jan. 27. Why so soon? That's when the committee will take its first look at Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's proposed phase-out of state funding for IdahoPTV—currently \$1.7 million per year.

"We are urging all Idahoans who value IPTV's quality programming and educational excellence to take immediate action and ask their legislators to reject the proposal to eliminate state funding," said Jerry Evans, former state superintendent of public instruction and the spokesperson for the new group in a press release.

Save Idaho Public Television has also launched a new Web site to explain just what the loss of state funds would mean, which would include drastically slashing the range of the broadcast area, meaning many rural areas would lose access to public television.

Supporters have also been flocking to join a Facebook group to show support for the organization. As of Monday, Jan. 25, the group had 2,638 members.

So, fans of Outdoor Idaho, Idaho Reports, Sesame Street, Britcoms, Masterpiece Theater, Antiques Roadshow or any of the other IdahoPTV-only programming, here's your chance to join forces.

Will Idaho Public TV get the ax? Here's my best guess

By Kevin Richert, Idaho Statesman

Mon, 01/25/2010 - 9:55am.

Parks enthusiasts raised cain over Gov. Butch Otter's ill-advised plan to shut down the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. On Friday, Otter blinked, patching together a plan to keep Parks and Recreation alive.

A bipartisan group of leaders wrote a sharply worded appeal to save Idaho's Human Rights Commission. On Friday, the state cooked up a plan to keep the commission going, under the auspices of the Idaho Department of Labor.

Now, here comes the next cavalry over the hill. Supporters of Idaho Public Television have taken to the Internet to fight a four-year phaseout of public TV funding. A Save Idaho Public Television Facebook page has quickly attracted more than 2,600 members. A Web site encourages supporters to e-mail lawmakers by Wednesday morning, when IPTV honcho Peter Morrill is scheduled to testify before the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee.

This isn't a done deal. Just close. I won't guarantee that public television gets spared, but I bet it happens.

- First off, don't underestimate the value of an aggressive social media campaign. A year ago, social media was a key ingredient in a drive to defeat increases in beer and wine taxes. A surprising number of legislators are active on Facebook; I'm sure they're already on the receiving end of the save-public TV buzz.
- Second, I think the public TV advocates have hit on a great selling point. If Otter's proposed cuts go through, rural viewers are most likely to lose the service, since public TV would likely focus on serving its viewer and donor bases, starting with the Treasure Valley.

From the save public TV website: "The State's current \$1.7 million contribution primarily maintains the system's 41 translator sites allowing public television to reach nearly every corner of Idaho. Without continuing state support virtually all of these sites, providing programming to every corner of the state, will cease to operate."

That's a strong argument for public TV funding, and I think it will resonate with budget-writers. JFAC is (somewhat) heavy on rural representation — and the two co-chairs, Sen. Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, and Rep. Maxine Bell, R-Jerome, represent the Magic Valley's Jerome and Minidoka counties.

- Third, and most important, Otter has done a poor job of presenting a plan behind any of his program cuts. He hasn't explained how public TV, which already gets 62 percent of its money from private sources, can realistically expect to cobble together enough donations to replace state funding. He also hasn't articulated a long-term vision for what a free-standing public broadcasting system would look like.

Of course, he also didn't present much of a long-term strategy for Parks and Recreation, the Human Rights Commission, or the other agencies on his chopping block. Instead of presenting some innovative plans to reorganize state government, Otter has proposed cuts that have felt improvised and poorly thought out. Hence the face-saving scrambles to salvage Parks and Recreation and the Human Rights Commission.

So lawmakers have a choice. They can go along with a sketchy plan to phase out public TV, or they can score points with voters by cooking up some patchwork to spare a popular program. Just remember, this is an election year for 105 legislators.

It's interesting. When Statehouse conservatives defend the status quo of \$1.75 billion in sales tax exemptions and exceptions, the argument usually goes something like this: all of these tax breaks have a built-in constituency, which makes it hard to eliminate them. We have seen this session how difficult it is to eliminate an agency — because every agency has a constituency.

If I had to bet, I'd wager that this is precisely what saves public TV.

Idaho PTV makes its case against phaseout of aid

www.current.org

The newspaper and website about public TV and radio in the U.S.

Jan 25, 2010

On Wednesday, Idaho Public Television chief Peter Morrill makes his case for continued state aid in a state legislative finance committee hearing at 10:30 a.m. Mountain time. Like many other legislative meetings, it will be streamed live on IPT's Idaho Legislature Live. <http://idahoptv.org/leglive/>

Friends of Idaho Public Television, a nonprofit support group for the state-owned network, has created a web-page, "Save Idaho Public Television," to get viewers involved in its fight against a four-year total phaseout of state funding. The station's \$7 million budget counts on nearly \$2 million from the state. If Gov. C.L. Otter's proposed budget passes, that would disappear in equal portions over the next four years. Of the station's \$7 million budget, around \$2 million is state aid. Peter Morrill, g.m., is facing remedies such as laying off 19 staffers, closing three studios, and discontinuing maintenance to 39 of 40 rural translators and translator relays. See the latest issue of Current for much more on state funding nationwide, which has been cut by a total of \$23 million -- so far.
posted at 2:54 PM EST

Defunded IdahoPTV Would Cut Legislature Live as Well

Monday, January 25, 2010

Posted by Andrew Crisp on Mon, Jan 25, 2010 at 12:54 PM

Boise Weekly

Idaho Public Television has been an institution in this state since 1965. Beginning in Moscow, the organization has expanded over 40 years to reach 97 percent of Idahoans, according to its Web site. Their programming has been able to reach into even the more isolated, rural communities of the Gem State.

Peter Morrill, the general manager of the station, is concerned about the agency's ability to continue that statewide pursuit. With Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter's recommendation to phase IdahoPTV out of the general fund, Morrill views this "of great concern" to his organization.

"First of all, we are a state organization. We receive approximately \$1.6 million from the state of Idaho which makes up roughly 25% of our budget. The state funds that have come to us have been used to maintain the state-wide broadcast system," Morrill tells citydesk.

Morrill feels that if this extra money to subsidize the broadcast system doesn't come from the state, it's likely that it won't be available from other sources.

"Our initial projections are if we were to lose the funds, we would really have to pull back those state-wide systems. Virtually all of the repeater programs in the rural areas would not really be supportable without some form of subsidization," he said.

A group has already sprung up that's attempting to voice their dissatisfaction with the state cuts to public television. "Save Idaho Public Television" prompts fans of the organizations programs to contact their legislators to say "don't kill Idaho Television" and to join their 2,600 strong Facebook group as well.

IdahoPTV might also have to cut the Legislature Live service that beams video of committee and House and Senate proceedings throughout the Capitol building and over the Web. As Morrill cites the need for state funding to offset the \$30,000 rent in the Joe R. Williams Building, where the infrastructure is housed, and the \$105,000 staff costs.

"That would be one of the services, that if we lost state support, I'm not seeing where the resources would come to continue that service," said Morrill.

Budget cuts can be costly

Idaho risks losing federal funds by trimming certain programs

By Betsy Z. Russell, The Spokesman-Review

Sunday, January 24, 2010

BOISE – Idaho is discovering the hidden costs of budget cuts.

One example: The \$1.6 million the state would save by cutting off funding for Idaho Public Television may be less than the amount IPTV has to repay the federal government for portions of \$4 million in grants. The grants paid for equipment to convert the statewide TV network to digital signals, and if the equipment isn't used for its intended purpose for 10 years, repayments are due.

Another: Gov. Butch Otter's initial proposal to eliminate the state Department of Parks and Recreation and sell its headquarters building sought to save \$10 million, but it could have cost the state the landmark Harriman State Park, likely worth \$50 million. That's because the Harriman family's gift of the park to the state was contingent on Idaho setting up a professional parks department.

On Friday, Otter dropped the plan in favor of a more modest proposal to cut costs at state parks and lay off 25 employees of the agency.

And at the state Department of Health and Welfare, every \$1 cut in state funds means losing \$3.75 in federal money, too. Budget cuts there over the past two years have cost the state \$120 million in federal funding.

"I don't know if it matters to a lot of people that there are these hidden costs, but I kind of hope it does," said Steve Shaw, a political scientist at Northwest Nazarene University. "It looks like somebody didn't do their homework."

Another possible explanation, Shaw said, is that the cuts may be more about ideology than fiscal realities. "What do we think government should be doing?" he asked. "It seems like an increasing amount of people on the Republican side in the state Legislature, especially in the Idaho House, think, well, not much."

Jon Hanian, spokesman for Otter, said the state has never had to make such deep cuts in its budget. "We can no longer continue to fund the same level of government that we have for many, many years," he said. "That's where we are."

Two former state budget directors say it's very difficult to make big cuts in Idaho's budget. "Once you get to a certain point, it's darn hard to make cuts without hurting yourself in the long run," said Mike Brassey, who served as budget director for Republican Gov. Phil Batt.

Marty Peterson, who was budget director for Democratic Govs. Cecil Andrus and John Evans, said, "I think the lesson is thoroughness in analyzing decision options. ... These are complex programs, especially any time you have the federal government involved and they're getting large amounts of federal money."

That's the case with the state Department of Health and Welfare, where Otter's recommending a small increase in state funding next year, from \$462 million this year to \$483 million in fiscal year 2011. But that's still well below the state's budget for Health and Welfare two years ago of \$504 million – at a time when caseloads for public assistance programs are soaring.

Brassey said that when he served under Batt, he successfully eliminated the state Department of Labor and Industrial Services without incurring any hidden costs. But the move was aimed more at reorganization than budget-cutting; it cleared the way for establishment of the state Department of Environmental Quality. (Idaho limits the number of state departments to 20.)

Some functions were transferred to other agencies; some were eliminated. "In fairness, I had been over at the department for a month or two filling in" while the director was ill, Brassey said, so he was intimately familiar with the agency. "Maybe that helped."

Otter proposed to eliminate the state's Soil Conservation Commission next year to save \$1.3 million, but an interim legislative committee that's been working on the plan hasn't found any good way to do that.

"You just can't go out and eliminate the commission," said House GOP Caucus Chairman Ken Roberts, R-Donnelly, who's co-chairing the interim committee. The commission helps local soil conservation districts around the state with technical support to get federal grant money, he said, bringing millions in grants to help farmers protect water quality and preserve natural resources.

Roberts said the committee is now focusing on developing a better administrative structure for soil conservation, which he said may or may not save money.

"What you've got is a program that's been in place for 70 years," said Roberts, one of the Legislature's most fervent budget-cutting advocates. "Probably one of the most efficient uses of government money we have is soil conservation programs."

Why cut public TV? State liquor is quicker

Marty Trillhaase, Lewiston Tribune

January 24, 2010

Tough times demand redefining the proper role of government - especially if the private sector can do a better job and produce more money for the state in the process.

Sounds like Idaho Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter, doesn't it?

Except the Idaho governor is nibbling around the edges. His ideas? Weaning public television of tax support. That will decimate the network. Doing the same to the Human Rights Commission. It may kill that organization. Neither will net much money.

But if Otter wants to privatize something, he's not asking the obvious questions: Seventy-seven years after Prohibition's repeal, why is selling liquor a legitimate function of government?

Government can restrict the age of those who buy booze, but why should it set the price?

Government can set the hours when you can purchase liquor, but why it should tell you where?

Of the 18 states that operate liquor stores, three are reconsidering.

Newly elected Virginia Gov. Robert McDonnell wants to privatize his state's 300 liquor stores.

North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue has named a panel to examine how her state sells booze.

And momentum is building in Washington state.

Last month, Auditor Brian Sonntag outlined a series of options that would move Washington out of the liquor business while providing the state with more cash. Among them:

-Sell the state's liquor distribution center, which would mean Washington would get \$33 million. A private firm could warehouse the state's inventory or liquor distributors could deliver their product on demand, essentially storing it themselves.

-Auction liquor licenses to retailers. Merchants would pay a fee to the state. How much money they make selling booze would be up to them. Sonntag says this would increase state revenues between \$198.3 million and \$316.6 million from 2012 to 2016.

-Privatize the retail outlets and let free enterprise set the number and location of stores. This would generate between \$115.4 million and \$240.1 million over five years.

-Allow full privatization and tax liquor sales. The state would get \$88.1 million more during a five-year period.

Left untouched, Washington's 315 stores and contract retailers would produce \$2.36 billion for state and local government during that time frame. So Sonntag's options would mean a premium of 4 percent to 14 percent.

Thus far, three liquor privatization bills have emerged in Olympia. Sen. Tim Sheldon, D-Potlatch, has proposed giving the state until Dec. 1 to work out a plan. His bill got a hearing last week, the first time that's happened since Sheldon started promoting privatization a dozen years ago.

Idaho's 65 state liquor stores and 102 contract stores generate \$46.1 million in revenues for government programs. If Sonntag's findings are at all applicable, going private could increase Idaho's profit anywhere from \$1.8 million to \$6.5 million - which has got to exceed whatever money Otter can squeeze out of public television, commissions that look out for minorities and the disabled, and possibly even the parks department.

Forgive Otter if he groans at this idea. A year ago, he tried to get Idaho away from the business of deciding who can sell liquor by the drink. While the state Senate agreed 23-12, the House played the role of spoiler, rejecting the plan 42-28.

But if he's serious about recharting the relationship between government, the individual and private markets, here's an idea whose time is coming. - M.T

KUID may close without state funds

Written by Chava Thomas – Argonaut, University of Idaho

THURSDAY, 21 JANUARY 2010

The Idaho Public Television station, KUID, may be forced to close if cuts proposed by Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter are approved. The KUID studio, located behind the J.A. Albertson Building, is used by University of Idaho students to produce programs and learn about broadcasting. Photo illustration by Tyler Macy/Argonaut

KUID, Idaho's oldest public television station, may be closed if cuts proposed by Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter are approved.

Pat Hart, interim chair of the School of Journalism and Mass Media, said the university owns much of the station's equipment. She said she does not know what would happen if KUID were to close.

"Our instructional needs continue," Hart said. "We still need the facility, we still need the studio, we still need the equipment so our students can become professionals.

JAMM students use the KUID studio to cut their teeth in broadcasting, utilizing the state of the art equipment to produce shows like "Mostly Moscow." The station lies directly south of the J.A. Albertson Building, across a parking lot.

"Students produce programs that use the equipment," Hart said. "It's a reciprocal arrangement."

Most money for IPTV come from private donations, 82 percent of which come from southwestern Idaho.

"That's where the bulk of the state's population is," said Peter Morrill, general manager of IPTV. "We've always viewed ourselves as a statewide resource."

About 25 percent of the budget for IPTV comes from the state general reserve. Morrill said without this money, IPTV would most likely have to close its rural stations.

"We have to look at every community we serve," Morrill said.

Morrill said IPTV would have to lay off one-third of its employees, and close three of their four facilities. The legislature would make the decision about whether to implement the changes.

"We hope to have some determination by the legislature by early March," he said.

Rep. Tom Trail, R-Moscow, said the cuts to education and public television are predictable.

"Everything's about money," he said. "When you're faced with a budget crisis, you cut education or you raise taxes."

Trail is introducing a bill that would call for an evaluation of tax-exempt organizations in Idaho, which he said could generate more revenue for the state.

Trail is among a minority in his party. Most Republican legislators in Idaho support Otter's proposed budget cuts, according to reports in the Spokesman Review and Idaho Press-Tribune.

"There aren't too many pieces of good news down here," Trail said.

Hart said she hopes for a favorable outcome.

"We just need to make sure the facilities support the instructional goals for our students," she said.

KUID, 45 years old this September, recently completed an upgrade to digital high-definition equipment. A 2006 estimate placed the cost at about \$840,000. UI operated the station until 1982, when Idaho Public Television was created to oversee all four statewide public TV stations.

Up on my soapbox: DON'T CUT IDAHO PUBLIC TELEVISION

January 22, 2010 by Shannon Paterson

I normally don't spout off much about politics here on AnchorMommy, but right now, I feel I have no choice. Something very disturbing is happening in my beautiful home state of Idaho: funding for Idaho Public Television could soon be phased out — for good.

Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter (yes, out of state readers, the image you're picturing is probably accurate — he does go by the name of Butch, and he's a cowboy boot devotee) is hoping to plug a massive state deficit by cutting many things, including education funding (you know it's bad here when they start talking about education cuts) and funding for IPTV.

I know the money has to come from somewhere. And I am by no means advocating that the education budget is the place to look for more savings if IPTV is spared. But here's the thing — to start solving this budget problem, Gov. Otter needs about \$175 million from reserves and \$100 million in budget cuts. The proposed cuts to IPTV would only save about \$1.6 million a year. (The grand plan is to cut about \$4 million in IPTV funding over the next four years.) Seems to me the savings of cutting IPTV's funding is just a drop in the bucket when it comes to fixing Idaho's budget problems.

And if lawmakers approve the plan, the costs would be great. There are many, many aspects of Gov. Otter's proposal that disturb me, but the following are what I see as the most upsetting losses:

1. Public television service to Idaho's rural communities. This doesn't affect me a great deal personally, since I live in the Treasure Valley, and I will continue to pick up national public television programs my household can't live without, such as SuperWhy?, Clifford the Big Red Dog and the all-important Sesame Street. (However, we will lose the IdahoPTV Kids Channel which I find invaluable, because I can turn it on at practically any hour of the day that I need to keep Kellan occupied for a few minutes, and feel confident that he is watching quality programming.) But without its current level of funding, IPTV most likely will not be able to continue broadcasting outside the Treasure Valley. Imagine — Moscow, the town that is home to the state's only land-grant university, will get no public television signal. Service to Twin Falls, which is practically next door to the Treasure Valley, would likely go black.

2. The television studio at KUID — the place where I got my feet wet in the world of broadcast media — would most likely be closed. I have to be honest. This is the one that makes me most upset, obviously because I have a personal connection to that studio. But first, a little background.



University of Idaho students using new studio cameras at KUID, 2008 (Photo courtesy Glenn Mosley)

KUID studio



University of Idaho Broadcast news students producing a show in the KUID studio, Spring 2009 (Photo courtesy Glenn Mosley)

When I majored in Broadcast Journalism at the University of Idaho (the program was then called Visual Communication) I trained on equipment that was as much as 50 years old. The switcher was a behemoth, and looked like it was straight out of a Star Trek film. And the studio lights? Let's just say I said a little prayer before flipping any of those switches because that light board was probably born the same year as my parents. Now? KUID has a brand new, state-of-the-art production facility — one I would have killed to train in as a student. If KUID is closed, which it most likely will be, what will happen to that equipment? It doesn't sound like anyone is really sure about that at this point. It is entirely possible that students will simply have to wave goodbye to that professional-grade studio and the guarantee of hands-on, practical training in their chosen field. This, friends, is a travesty. As Pat Hart, the Acting Director of the School of Journalism and Mass

Media puts it, "A working TV studio is crucial to our recruiting efforts. It's become a must-stop on the campus tour for prospective JAMM students and their families, and has added greatly to the "Wow!" factor — particularly for students who first visit WSU and don't even get near their studio."

What sets the University of Idaho's Broadcast Journalism program apart is the hands-on, personal training students get from their instructors. I still know many of the professors there, and I have no doubt that their personal attention to each student will not disappear. But it breaks my heart to think of the possibility that those students will be reduced to station tours of television stations in Spokane and Boise to get anywhere near a working TV studio. What kind of training is that for the next generation of broadcast journalists? In a world where story length and depth is replaced by brevity and shocking soundbites, why would we give up-and-coming communicators LESS opportunity instead of MORE???

As I mentioned earlier, these are just a couple of the serious problems I see with Governor Otter's plan. I believe his proposal is short-sighted, and quite honestly, makes a much-needed public service nothing more than a political pawn. (It is said that a documentary on gay parents upset Idaho conservatives 10 years ago, and since ever since then, there has been talk of making IPTV a market-based operation.) If Idaho Public Television has to retool its mission and focus solely on providing service to the Treasure Valley, then it ceases to become Idaho Public Television. It then becomes Boise Privately Funded Television.

What now? Well, those who care about this issue — or even those who are slightly peeved by the idea — need to speak out. Luckily, that's pretty easy to do, if you can spare 10 or 15 minutes to send an email to one of the decision makers at Idaho's Statehouse. You can contact your local legislator here. Or perhaps more importantly, you should contact the Joint Finance Committee Co-Chair, Representative Maxine Bell, through this email form. Here is the contact form for Senator Dean Cameron, the other JFAC Co-Chair. The JFAC committee has the final say on where Idaho's tax dollars go, and those two are the big cheeses in charge of that committee. The Facebook group Save Idaho Public Television also has a great list of resources for submitting editorials to your local newspaper. Please — do what you can to make your voice heard on this issue.

Idaho Public Television is very good at taking care of much of its own needs. It raises about 2/3 of its budget from private donations every year. But according to IPTV General Manager Peter Morrill in an email sent to concerned UI alumni and supporters such as myself, IPTV would have a difficult time making up for what it could potentially lose in state funding. "It is highly unlikely that we could raise an additional \$1.6 million each year on top of what we currently raise privately," says Morrill. "It is even more unlikely that it could be sustained over many years. If you have opinions on this matter, now is the time to let policy makers know."

From: Idaho State Broadcasters Association
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2010 3:33 PM
Subject: **IPTV Statement of Support**
isba@qwestoffice.net

"The Idaho State Broadcasters Association supports state funding for Idaho Public Television because of the critical services Idaho Public Television provides to the citizens of Idaho. The ISBA recognizes Idaho Public Television's unique ability to reach all parts of the state, offering even the most rural citizens access to vital broadcast resources. Idaho Public Television's programming and services complement the commercial services offered by other ISBA members, providing coverage and feeds from state government activities, statewide Emergency Alert Services, and pre-school through adult educational services. Idaho Public Television also serves a vital broadcast student training role in conjunction with the University of Idaho and Idaho State University. These facilities play a central role in the education of Idaho's future broadcasters.

The ISBA encourages continued state financial support for the infrastructure and related administration needed to maintain Idaho Public Television's statewide activities."

Philosophy, finances behind push to trim Idaho PTV

By JOHN MILLER

The Associated Press

Tuesday, January 19, 2010; 10:33 AM

BOISE, Idaho -- Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's push to eliminate Idaho Public Television's state funding is as much philosophical as financial: In an era of private networks, cable and Internet, government should exit the TV business.

Under the move, the 45-year-old network would likely trim broadcasts that now reach 300,000 people weekly to only Idaho's most populous areas, as 41 of 42 translators that broadcast seven channels to far-flung regions are dismantled.

"Government TV," in Otter's words, has outlived the day when it was needed to connect Idaho's disparate northern, southern and eastern reaches, divided by geography and culture.

In fact, the Republican governor would push to wean public TV off Idaho tax dollars even without a \$50 million budget hole, his aides said.

"The budget sped things up and caused things to come closer to the surface that would have been addressed anyway," said Mark Warbis, Otter's spokesman. "Every dollar you save is a dollar more you have to put into the classroom."

Larry Sidman, the Association of Public Television Stations' lobbyist in Arlington, Va., said state governments cut at least \$23 million from public TV funding this fiscal year, with more expected in 2011. The hardest hit states include Pennsylvania, where stations lost 90 percent of their \$12 million state funding.

But the main reason is because tax revenue is shrinking, Sidman said, not out of concern support is inappropriate.

"There are pockets of skepticism about why government should be funding TV," Sidman conceded. "But I think the strength of that view had declined markedly over the last decade."

Peter Morrill, Idaho Public Television general manager, learned of Otter's plan in late-December: His \$1.6 million appropriation - a fourth of its \$7 million annual budget - would be gone by 2014.

If the plan is approved, Morrill expects to begin cutting 20 of 54 full-time and 37 of 58 part-time jobs this spring. Moscow and Pocatello studios would be shuttered; equipment that broadcasts the Idaho Legislature would go dark.

Reception could eventually be limited to Boise, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Falls, Pocatello and maybe Twin Falls, as remote digital translators that relay "Sesame Street" and locally produced "Outdoor Idaho" to 41 rural communities like Bonners Ferry, Challis, Salmon and Soda Springs fall prey to weather and aren't repaired.

Here's why: Currently, Morrill's station gets 63 percent of funding from private sources.

With 82 percent of that from southwestern Idaho's Treasure Valley, those contributors want to pay for programs, not to maintain gear on distant mountaintops just so residents scattered in the hinterlands can get a signal.

Without state support, "we would be forced to pull back our statewide operations and focus on populated areas," he said.

Otter points to neighboring Oregon as a public broadcasting operation that's been severed from state government.

Oregon Public Broadcasting, with radio and television stations that reach 3.8 million people, was privatized in 1993.

But the station still got more than \$23 million in appropriations from 1993 to 2003, as well as \$125,000 in 2009, said chief executive Steve Bass. Oregon lawmakers also gave \$3 million in 2007, to upgrade digital translators so rural communities could still get signals.

"Even in our privatized state, there's still a role and a need for some state support to provide equivalent service in both rural and urban areas," Bass said.

In 1981, the Idaho Legislature cut all but \$70,000 of public television's funding after it angered lawmakers with programs about logging practices and lead poisoning in northern Idaho. A year later, they relented, but required the then three stations to be operated as a statewide network under Board of Education oversight.

And in 1999 and 2000, programs about homosexuality prompted lawmakers to require programming disclaimers.

Rep. Steve Hartgen, R-Twin Falls, remains irked by what he said is public TV's liberal, pro-government bias. But he's not ready to pull the plug, saying state funding allows lawmakers to make sure things don't go too far.

"It does give the state some oversight," Hartgen said.

Rep. Maxine Bell, the Republican co-chair of the budget committee, said Otter's push for savings has merit. Still, she believes public TV remains a key part of Idaho's educational system, including daily broadcasts of the Legislature that show voters back home what their lawmakers are up to in Boise.

"They are an integral part of opening up the activity we have at the Capitol to the people of the state," Bell said. "I think their programming is terrific."

January 19, 2010

Dear present and former JAMM Advisory Board members:

I am standing in for Kenton Bird as acting director of the School of Journalism and Mass Media this semester, and I'm contacting you because of a developing matter involving JAMM's longstanding collaboration with Idaho Public Television. Perhaps you've been following stories about IPTV that were published last week in the Boise Statesman, Lewiston Tribune, and Moscow-Pullman Daily News.

KUID/Idaho Public Television is threatened by proposed budget cuts that could close the station and affect our majors in the Broadcast/Digital Media Production program. We strongly support the continuance of IPTV on campus, but should the station close, the School's instructional needs for up-to-date HD equipment, the facility, and some engineering support will continue.

As an supportive partner in JAMM's instructional mission, you could be in a position to help explain to constituents the importance of our collaboration, one that has served the state both through programming and instruction. I am providing below a few paragraphs of background about the collaboration between the School, KUID, and IPTV, and about why keeping that investment is vital to our instructional mission and recruitment efforts:

KUID-TV was put on the air by the Department of Communications at the University of Idaho in 1965, housed at the Radio-TV Center. It was operated through this academic unit of the UI, and its successor, the School of Communication, until 1982. The Idaho State Legislature created the state agency now known as Idaho Public television that year; IPTV took over operational control at that time. What has never changed, however, was that students have always taken broadcasting and digital media related courses in the facility.

Since 1982, IPTV and the UI, through the academic unit (now the School of Journalism and Mass Media) have cooperatively operated the Radio-TV Center as a multi-use media facility used by broadcasting professionals and students. Each semester, more than one hundred students from majors inside and outside of JAMM use the digital media equipment at the Radio-TV Center, producing class projects and working on a professional radio or television program. It has been for the past several years a model of cooperation among state agencies.

The facility includes a high definition television studio, digital video and audio edit suites, and offices for faculty and public television and radio staff. It is a unique learning environment for students in that they move freely between classes and professional work projects, which in the past year have included Northwest Public Radio stories; studio work for Idaho Public Television programs such as "Dialogue"; news and sports packages for outlets including ESPN and television stations in Boise and Spokane; and weekly Vandal football highlight reel for alumni and booster gatherings.

A working TV studio is crucial to our recruiting efforts. It's become a must-stop on the campus tour for prospective JAMM students and their families, and has added greatly to the "Wow!" factor -- particularly for students who first visit WSU and don't even get near their studio.

Thank you for being JAMM's advisors and advocates in difficult times. Please contact us with questions and for additional information.

Patricia Hart, Acting Director
School of Journalism and Mass Media
University of Idaho
Moscow, Idaho 83844-3178
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Idaho public TV on chopping block

Posted: Monday, January 18, 2010 12:00 am

By Jimmy Hancock, jhancock@journalnet.com

Idaho State Journal, Pocatello

POCATELLO — Tom Hallaq said the upgraded facility at KISU-TV has been a boon to the television broadcast program at Idaho State University, but added that the possibility it could all go away by the end of this school year is disheartening.



Photo by: Doug Lindley

“The school and the state have come together to provide a state-of-the-art facility that really is better than what many commercial stations have available and exceeds what is in many of the universities we compete with,” said Hallaq, assistant professor for television broadcast at ISU. “It really strengthens our position but it feels like the rug could be pulled out from under us.”

Hallaq’s concerns are echoed by Annette Stebbins, KISU-TV’s station manager.

“The (old) equipment was so antiquated that it wasn’t even a good learning tool,” Stebbins said of KISU-TV prior to the upgrade. “Now they are using what is out there in the market. It is a little frustrating that we have gotten the grants to make this facility what it is, and now we are looking at possibly closing.”

The concerns expressed by Stebbins and Hallaq, among others, stem from Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter’s State of the State address on Jan. 11, during which he named Idaho Public Television as one of seven agencies or programs for which he would like to phase out state funding by fiscal 2014.

In a release responding to that announcement, Idaho Public Television officials expressed what they feel would be the likely effects of eliminating the program’s state funding.

Should the Legislature enact that funding cut this session, the effects would include the immediate elimination of 19 full-time and 37 part-time employees as part of a scaling back that would see the closure of studios in Pocatello, Moscow and in the JR Williams Building in Boise, which provides live coverage of the Idaho Legislature.

Idaho PTV General Manager Peter Morrill said the loss of approximately \$1.6 million his program receives from the state, although about 23 percent of his budget, would have a ripple effect on the rest of his funding in both the short and long term.

Of its total budget, Idaho PTV receives roughly 63 percent through private donations — those it gets from individuals, corporations and foundations. Approximately 14 percent of the budget comes through federal funding that trickles down from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The \$950,000 received annually from the CPB is in part contingent on state funding.

“It’s complicated to calculate just how those funds will be affected,” Morrill said. “It is a complex formula (and it’s) hard to try and make a bold calculation, but it’s fair to say it will affect that to a couple of hundred thousand (dollars).”

What’s even more difficult to figure out is just how much of its primary source of funding, private donation, will be lost and over what period of time. Although the local stations will be gone, maintenance of the transmitter at KISU-TV, which services Pocatello, Idaho Falls and their surrounding areas, will continue. Transmitters in the Treasure Valley and Coeur d’Alene will also continue to be maintained.

But for its 42 rural repeaters, which allow the broadcast signal to reach Idaho's massive rural areas, it's a different story entirely.

"We are estimating that 41 of our 42 rural transmitters will continue to operate only until they are no longer to operate," Morrill said. "When they malfunction, they will be turned off and remain off. You will probably see this start to happen within a few months of a decision by the Legislature."

Over time, that means rural locations dependent on receiving the Idaho PTV signal via antenna will no longer be able to see that broadcast.

The maintenance of transmitters in Twin Falls and Moscow will likely continue for at least a year, but because they are both areas Morrill described as "relatively modest," he is unsure if it will be affordable to continue funding their maintenance.

If the state budget cut is enacted, and given the anticipated ripple effect to the remaining budget, Morrill said a change in some of the programming offered to shows less costly to produce or broadcast will likely be made as well.

While private donations from rural areas are likely to dwindle more quickly, Morrill said about 82 percent of Idaho PTV's private funding comes from within the Treasure Valley area and those funds won't likely be affected immediately.

But, Morrill anticipates the reduction in quality offerings and the loss of the legislative coverage will take their toll over time.

"The bulk of our national programming will decline," he said. "The value for the private contributor will be less compelling. I can't say what the overall dive in contributions will be, but the reductions in offerings won't help."

Should the Legislature adopt Otter's recommendation and phase out state funding for Idaho PTV and the effects Morrill is estimating come to fruition, he is uncertain just what will happen to the state-of-the-art equipment at KISU-TV when it closes, but it does belong to Idaho PTV. At this point, Morrill, only guessing, suggests it could be sold or given to another department within the state.

Effectively, that could mean the equipment would simply be given to ISU. Although that would ease some of the sting for Hallaq, he said KISU-TV's staff is an integral part of the whole package.

"With the equipment being new, we don't expect any problems, but over the long term, as a department, we don't have the resources to maintain that high-end equipment properly," he said.

Dave Turnmire, KISU-TV's chief engineer, has been at the station for 30 years, working through much of that time with old, antiquated equipment. But today, with the new equipment, Turnmire said there is again a buzz in the air and students filling the studio.

"That's my favorite part," Turnmire said of the increased student activity at KISU-TV.

Turnmire's office is just across the hall from the equipment room.

"They are usually producing a program on Thursday afternoons and I make sure I am in my office so that I can help them if needed," he said.

Idaho Rep. James Ruchti, D-Pocatello, said the money the state gives Idaho PTV is essential.

"Everyone knows in this climate it's extremely difficult to raise money," he said. "I think they do a phenomenal job with the funds they have."

Ruchti believes sentiment against cutting state funding of Idaho PTV is one that will be heard from both political parties.

Hallaq called KISU-TV "invisible," saying that few people realize the "key role" the station plays on ISU's campus.

"We really rely on them quite a bit," he said. "Without their staff here, it's going to be difficult for us to get by."

Killing Off Big Bird...It Has Been Tried Before

The Johnson Post

By Marc Johnson

<http://thejohnsonpost.blogspot.com/>

Idaho Governor Butch Otter proposed in his State of the State speech this week a four year phase out of state support for Idaho Public Television. Otter's proposal would eventually eliminate the \$1.7 million the system now receives and uses primarily to support its services statewide.

Combined with other holdbacks, the reduction will be more like 33% in the first year.

Otter's idea has received extensive media attention and, in an irony too rich not to mention, the governor's speech containing the proposal was carried statewide only on, you got it, Idaho Public Television. Here's guessing the public pushback is just beginning.

In an editorial, the Times-News made a practical political point that legislators may really want to ponder: "There are few more respected institutions in Idaho than IPTV. It's beloved by every Idaho parent with a 4-year-old - even if those 4-year-olds have long since grown up."

The governor and his advisers have said that public TV should hustle up private and corporate support to keep going, but that seems very unlikely given two hard facts.

One, the folks who run Idaho Public Television have mastered the art of looking under ever rock in Idaho for support. They run a lean, mean operation that makes the absolutely most of the checks they collect from Idahoans. In fact, compared to peer operations - states with state licensed systems - Idaho already out performs in the private fundraising arena.

Two, the worst hard times in anyone's memory hardly seem like a realistic the time to tell a state operation that has been around for 40 years to rattle the tin cup more loudly. Every non-profit I know, even the most popular - and public TV is popular - is hurting in this economic environment.

[Full disclosure: I worked for Idaho Public Television for about eight years back in the 1970's and 1980's, I recently joined the Friends of Public TV Board and I have many long-time friends in the operation. I am not an unbiased observer.]

I do know, from having the weird experience of reporting on the decision, that public television funding was eliminated back in 1981. That, too, was a time of severe budget constraint and legislators were looking under rocks. Part of the discussion then, as now, was also ideological. Some lawmakers, including then-Senator Dave Little of Emmett, the chair of the Senate Finance Committee and father of the current Lt. Governor, simply didn't think the state belonged in the "government TV" business.

Legislators came to rethink - and some, perhaps to regret - the "unfunding" and state support was partially restored a year later. Also in 1982, the legislature mandated a statewide merger of services that created the streamlined, efficient system that exists today.

Personal opinion: I don't believe Idaho Public TV can survive in anything like its current form, covering virtually every corner of the state, with the kind of Idaho-specific programming and reach without state support. It simply won't happen.

This discussion is really about whether statewide public television service and programming will continue - period. Removing state funding will also serve to squander the substantial investment Idaho taxpayers have already made in a more-or-less state of the art delivery system. As a very practical matter, translators will sit unused on many mountain tops.

The state is big enough - no statewide newspaper, two time zones, diverse political and social culture - that public TV here, in more than any state I know, pulls the population together. It's been a bargain for 40 years and will be a bargain this year and next and beyond, even at twice the price.

Idaho Public TV gets \$97,153 in federal grant, but still facing state-funding phaseout by 2014

BOISE, Idaho (AP) _ Idaho Public Television faces losing all state funding by 2014, but it's due to get a nearly \$100,000 lift in the current year as part of \$25 million in federal grants being divvied up nationwide by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Director Peter Morrill learned Thursday of his station's \$97,153 share, meant to maintain local programming and services and preserve jobs that are threatened by declines in nonfederal funding stemming from the poor economy. Morrill said the grant was good news in an otherwise tough week that began when Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter announced plans to eventually eliminate the station's \$1.6 million in state funding, a move that could mean cutting 20 jobs starting in July.

Morrill was uncertain just how he'll be able to put the federal grant to work, but is investigating if he can use it to help ease six unpaid furlough days that 11 members of his staff will likely have to take before June 30.

Governor Otter's Press Conference

January 11, 2010

Reporter: Governor, your budget proposal calls for phasing out general fund support for several agencies, Idaho Public Television, the Blind Commission, and several others. Can you explain a little bit your philosophy and thinking behind that?

Governor Otter: Well those are totally two separate motivations there. One is that the Idaho Public Television really does have an opportunity. They've got a clientele that they service and they really do have an opportunity to bring in outside money and to become self-sufficient.

Reporter: Governor, do you and the First Lady support Idaho Public Television and if, why or why not?

Governor: Do we support, sure.

Reporter: Are you members?

Governor: No. Oh, are you honey?

First Lady: No.

Governor: Oh, no. I've supported them in the past. I've gone on and to the.

Reporter: What's the value of Idaho Public Television to the Idaho citizens?

Governor: Well, I think it has a lot of value but I think it also has a lot of constituency that is willing to support it. And if we have to do something in our tax structure that says, you know, for what you give to public television has a enhanced tax credit or something such as that, we'll do it. Now remember this is over a four year, a four year effort. We're going to do what we can to help them get self-sufficient and going through this first year there's going to be a lot of lessons learned about whether or not we can and can't do it.

Butch, the only REAL TV left anymore IS PBS. You just lost One Million Dollars by NOT getting any interest on the Ten Million TAXPAYER dollars you and the Legislature wanted to GIVE to the CAFOMEN so I've got a solution. According to the attached Controller's report, Section E, there are 213 people employed by the PUBLIC who make more money than you. With your salary, that totals \$32,011,742.41 in just salaries. It doesn't include retirement/PERSI, health benefits, life insurance DHR fees (whatever those are) et cetera so if you're planning on cutting what the PUBLIC pays for, cut those salaries in HALF for a year and that will save \$16,005,871.20. It'll probably save an equal amount in the PUBLIC paying retirement, health benefits etc etc. so along with the Ten Million TAXPAYER dollars ICLES doesn't get, I just found the PUBLIC at least \$26,005,871.20 if not double that.
Lee [mailto:silverchest1947@bridgemail.com]

Legislative Updates, State Budget

2 lawmakers defend public TV aid

Idaho Statesman

January 13, 2010

Gov. Butch Otter's proposed four-year phaseout of general fund appropriations to Idaho Public Television has gotten plenty of attention.

Otter said several times Monday that IPTV has a private constituency that should be able to sustain the network. His chief budget officer echoed those sentiments during a meeting Tuesday with legislative budget writers. But at least two lawmakers disagreed.

Rep. Maxine Bell, R-Jerome, co-chair of the Joint Finance Appropriations Committee, said IPTV has "showed they have a right to some general fund in what they're doing."

Rep. Shirley Ringo, D-Moscow, said: "It seems to be something of a Hail Mary to expect them to go even further in that direction (private money) and in any way maintain the quality programming that we have."

Editorial: Boise Public Television

From the Idaho Falls Post Register

Wednesday January 13, 2010

By Cory Taule

It comes as no surprise that among the budget cuts proposed by Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter is the gutting of Idaho Public Television. The recession has given religious conservatives and libertarian proper-role-of-government types the opportunity they've long desired: to cut taxpayer funding for "government television."

Otter's plan is to phase out general fund dollars for IPTV over four years. Your tax dollars account for about a quarter of the IPTV budget, roughly \$1.6 million per year. That, and the fact that IPTV sometimes airs shows the religious right doesn't agree with, has put public television in the crosshairs for nearly a decade.

So, what happens if Otter gets his way?

State money pays to maintain IPTV's statewide distribution system. That includes several rural translators, including one located on Menan Butte. The money also pays 11 salaries, including the field engineers who keep things running, and three power companies who provide the electricity to run the statewide system.

The idea is that private and corporate donations -- essentially user fees -- would replace state funding. But that's problematic. IPTV does better than other rural states in finding donors. That cow probably doesn't have much milk left and certainly not enough to make up for the loss of state funding.

What then? Public Television would become a market-based service. Like any other business, IPTV would follow the money. And where's that? Eighty-two percent of donations to IPTV come from the Treasure Valley.

Welcome to Boise Public Television.

Programming would still be seen in the state's large population centers, the Treasure Valley, the Idaho Falls-Pocatello corridor and Coeur d'Alene. But, because there's not many people or much money in rural Idaho, those folks could be out of luck.

The Challis retiree who lives on a fixed income and has come to depend on "the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" might be staring at a snowy screen in four years.

The young Lewisville mother -- wary of cable television programming and its never-ending barrage of commercials -- may no longer have access to "Sid the Science Kid" or "Sesame Street."

Continued service in Moscow and Twin Falls might not be sustainable without state funds. IPTV studios in Pocatello, Moscow and the Statehouse would be shuttered.

But hey, we're being fiscally responsible, right? Well, maybe not. Several years ago, Congress mandated public television stations convert to digital transmission.

The conversion was pricey. Idaho has spent \$14 million over the past 10 years. The feds kicked in another \$6 million and private donations accounted for \$2 million.

And now we're prepared to flush that investment to save \$1.6 million? It's a terrible idea and one legislators ought to kick to the curb.

Taking the State Out of State of the State

As agencies drop off public dole, expect less public interest, narrow reach

Boise Weekly

By Andrew Crisp

January 13, 2010

Boise State President Bob Kustra, on the eve of the legislative session, questioned the continued inclusion of the word "State" in the university's name, as students pick up more and more of the tab.

Idaho Public Television, state parks and a half dozen small agencies that assist workers facing discrimination and the state's disabled and minority populations could make the same argument after Otter's 2010 State of the State speech before a joint session of the Idaho House and Senate.

While Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter called for a "no-growth budget" next year, most agencies will see their new suggested funding level as a cut. The agencies listed above may view the cut as a form of state-sanctioned hara-kiri.

Now what does this mean for the average Idahoan? It means that Idaho is continuing to operate on a shoestring budget. It means that general fund appropriations this year will suffer more, with across the board cuts, on top of the holdback that was instituted in September 2009. It means the dissolution of roughly 400 government jobs, a \$27.9 million mid-year cut in public school budgets, the first such mid-year cut to public education in the state's history. And that's on top of Otter's other first from last year: the first public schools budget to pass at a lower level than the prior year.

Otter eulogized the move in his State of the State speech: "I'm proposing that for the balance of Fiscal Year 2010, we hold back an additional \$40 million from all state agencies and operations--including public schools. That is among the toughest recommendations I make today."

Otter also announced what he continually calls "consolidations" of state agencies, stating that we must avoid any "duplication of effort" or "inefficiency." What that boils down to is a four-year phase-out program for the group of agencies mentioned above that Otter said, in a not-so-veiled sleight, have "similar clientele" and "can rely on federal grants." The agencies include the Idaho Human Rights Commission, the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Idaho Public Television, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Council and others.

Otter failed to mention these cuts in his State of the State message.

The plan, which Unda' the Rotunda has to assume constitutes the bulk of the "sweeping changes to the way we do business in state government" to which Otter refers, will save the state \$2.4 million a year, according to Wayne Hammon, his budget director.

That's on a \$2.5 billion budget. A savings of 0.1 percent.

The Department of Parks and Recreation, a cherry red line item in the governor's chart, faces a 100 percent reduction. The governor suggests that the employees, less a liquidated 25, be moved under the umbrella of the Department of Lands.

The state's universities have also seen substantial cuts. After the \$15 million held back from the universities in September, Otter's plan, if accepted, calls for another \$3.8 million in cuts this fiscal year. The already strained institutions are balking at what the state is asking them to do, which ultimately results in a rise in tuition.

Kustra and University of Idaho President Duane Nellis came out swinging against the continued leeway taken with higher education funding.

The presidents were joined by their lobbyists, former state budget director Marty Peterson of the University of Idaho, and former House Speaker Bruce Newcomb at Boise State, who agreed: Colleges and universities, with access to tuition and fees, have become a bank for public schools, prisons and health and welfare.

Kustra implied that public universities were heading toward being entirely cut out of state budgets, and that all 50 states need to make a conscious, joint commitment to the value of higher education.

Armed with a host of graphs and budget numbers, Stacy Pearson, vice president of finance and administration at Boise State, outlined the drastic increase in tuition for Boise State students.

While a full-time resident pays \$2,432 per semester this year, the same student paid only \$897 per semester in 1997. That same year, 78.3 percent of the operating budget for Boise State was funded by the state. In 2010, just 58.7 percent is covered by the state. Student fees have increased at 5 percent or more, sometimes even up to 10 percentage points, every year since 1997.

"With so many people losing jobs and going back to school, we can't slap them with higher tuition fees on top of that," Pearson said.

"What we try to avoid around here is not say, 'I'm not going to tell you, but I'm going to come and get your funds,'" Pearson said.

Well, this week, Otter put her and every other state agency on notice. He's coming to get your funds.

Moscow TV station could be victim of budget cuts

KUID among stations that may close within the year if governor's budget is approved

By Holly Bowen Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Idaho Public Television's Moscow station could close within the year if the Idaho Legislature approves the lean state budget Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter proposed Monday. IdahoPTV is administered by the Idaho State Board of Education and receives about \$1.6 million in state general funds each year - about 25 percent of its total revenue.

Otter's proposed budget would steadily cut the agency's state-funded budget by \$400,000 each year for four years, said Peter Morrill, general manager of IdahoPTV.

"The governor's proposal is essentially to move Idaho Public Television into a market-based system," said Ron Pisaneschi, IdahoPTV's director of content.

Kris Freeland, station manager of KUID in Moscow, said Morrill told staffers the Moscow and Pocatello studios, in addition to some rural translators, could be closed within the year if the funding is cut. That would leave IdahoPTV's Boise studio, KAID, to stay afloat with private donations. Morrill said about 82 percent of the station's individual, corporate and foundation donations originate in southwestern Idaho.

"What (money) you raise and where you raise it is going to mean whether or not you can give that service or not," he said.

He said transmitters in the Coeur d'Alene, Treasure Valley and Idaho Falls areas would likely be sustainable with private dollars from large population bases. But transmitters in Moscow and Twin Falls and translators in rural areas - with the exception of the Lewiston translator - would probably not survive the cuts.

"I don't see the private sector as being able to replace, dollar for dollar, those rural and administrative functions," Morrill said.

Pisaneschi said IdahoPTV employs 56 full-time staffers in addition to other part-time workers. Freeland said five employees work at KUID in Moscow.

Morrill said if the budget cut is approved, IdahoPTV will likely have to return at least \$1 million worth of grant money to the federal government. IdahoPTV has received about \$4 million for equipment purchases and maintenance during the past 10 years, and the government still has a stake in some of it, Freeland said.

"If we're not using that equipment, we would potentially have to pay that back to the federal government," she said.

KUID has broadcasted from the University of Idaho campus since September 1965.

Freeland said about 100 students per semester use the studio to gain experience using broadcasting equipment. UI journalism students also produce a pair of television programs there. Pisaneschi said Idaho State University has a similar arrangement with the Pocatello studio, KISU. Morrill said his staff will be in touch with legislators and hope to find a solution that doesn't cut all state funding to public television.

"I don't know of any other situation where the state has stopped funding its own entity," he said.

Should the Idaho Legislature cut funding to Idaho Public Television?

By Cynthia Sewell - csewell@idahostatesman.com

Published: 01/13/10

What do you think of Gov. Butch Otter's plan to eliminate the \$1.5 million that the state contributes to Idaho Public Television?

Should taxpayer money — now 25 percent of the station's budget — be spent on this? What is the value of a statewide public television network and the Idaho programming it produces?

Please e-mail your comments cmsewell@idahostatesman.com or awebb@idahostatesman.com.

Please include your full name and the city in which you live and a phone number where you can be reached.

Support emerges for public television

Associated Press

January 12, 2009

BOISE -- Democrats and a key Republican are making a case that Idaho Public Television deserves ongoing support from the state's general fund.

IPT is one of five agencies Gov. Butch Otter targeted in his State of the State address Monday to be phased out by 2014 to save money.

Otter's budget chief Wayne Hammon told budget writers Tuesday the network should tap private sources to offset the \$1.7 million it gets annually from the general fund.

Moscow Democrat Shirley Ringo, a member of the Joint Finance Appropriations Committee, questioned the cut Tuesday. She says IPT already relies heavily on private support and funding cuts could threaten programming quality.

Jerome Republican Maxine Bell, co-chair of the budget committee, also suggested IPT has a right to general fund support to offset the costs of televising legislative sessions.

States Grapple with Tight Budgets, Growing Deficits (including an Idaho report)

NewsHour with Jim Lehrer

AIR DATE: Jan. 12, 2010

SUMMARY

As legislators return to work after the holidays, a troubling picture is emerging in almost every state in the nation. Budget woes and big deficits will mean tough decisions for lawmakers. Jeffrey Brown reports.

JEFFREY BROWN: That follows our look at budget woes in states across the country, as legislators return to work and face even bigger deficits and tough decisions in 2010.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a nonpartisan group, projects potential shortfalls of \$350 billion nationwide over the next two years, with every state except Montana and North Dakota facing fiscal trouble.

We take our own snapshot now with the help of PBS correspondents in New York, Colorado, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Idaho, and California.

JULIE PHILIPP: In Rochester, New York, I'm Julie Philipp.

Snow isn't the only thing piling up here. So is the state deficit. The forecast? A current year budget gap of \$500 million is expected to grow to \$9 billion by the end of the next fiscal year, the result of years of overspending and one-time fixes. Democratic Governor David Paterson, considered a lame duck by some political observers, is having trouble getting the state legislature to agree on significant spending cuts.

That's despite the fact the legislature is controlled by his own party. Things could freeze up even more, since every state lawmaker is up for reelection this year.

Robert Duffy is mayor of the city of Rochester.

ROBERT DUFFY: Cutting spending means making very unpopular decisions. That means jobs being cut. It means some services being cut. It means bureaucracy being minimized and cut through. Those things have to happen. They're not -- they're not easy. It's painful. But it has to happen. And I think, politically, I think everybody has to have the strength to do that.

JULIE PHILIPP: In December, as tax collections continued to decline, the state started falling behind on payments to Rochester, as well as other municipalities, schools and nonprofit organizations across New York. And Mayor Duffy is expecting a lot less state money in 2010.

Last year, at budget time, federal stimulus money and a long list of new state taxes and fees helped push the fiscal crisis back. Now there are fewer options.

GOV. DAVID PATERSON, D-N.Y.: This is a winter of reckoning.

JULIE PHILIPP: Governor Paterson is warning, deep cuts are the only way out of this storm.

TOM BEARDEN: I'm Tom Bearden in Colorado, where the state legislature goes back into session tomorrow facing a budget shortfall of historic proportions, \$600 million between now and the end of the fiscal year in June, a cumulative \$1.5 billion by the end of the next fiscal year.

Already, state employees have been forced to take unpaid furlough days. Some state prisoners have been released early. And mental health care services have been curtailed.

On top of all of that, the state has one of the toughest taxpayer bill of rights laws in the country. It limits the growth of the state budget and how much revenue the state government can keep.

Last week, Governor Bill Ritter announced he would not seek reelection, and said that would give him more freedom to deal with future cuts. But already on the table are potentially draconian cuts for Colorado's institutions of higher learning. Public schools face cuts of about 6 percent, and retirement benefits for public employees, like teachers, may be reduced.

Plummeting tax revenues also have had a huge impact on the nation's largest ongoing mass transit project, the FasTracks light-rail system. Voters approved a sales tax increase in 2004 to pay for it. But costs ballooned and revenue fell far short of projections. Voters will probably be asked to double that tax to finish construction on schedule.

PAULETTA TONILAS, spokesperson, Regional Transportation District: Right now, what we're saying is, to get the whole thing built out by 2017, our original schedule, it's going to take another four-tenths-of-a-percent sales tax increase. If we don't get more revenues into the program, then it's going to be after 2035 that the whole FasTracks program is realized.

JULIE PHILIPP: Local pundits say asking for a tax increase this fall in the midst of a recession could be a very tough sell.

SHAUNA SANFORD: I'm Shauna Sanford with the Louisiana Public Broadcasting.

Experts have called Louisiana's budget crisis the worse they have seen is more than two decades. The 2009 tax revenues were down, leaving the state with less money to spend in 2010 and a nearly \$250 million hole in the budget. This comes on the heels of a \$1.6 billion cut last year and projected shortfalls to the state general fund over the next two years, totaling nearly \$3 billion more, as federal stimulus dollars go away.

Deep cuts will have to be spread across many state agencies, including \$84 million from higher education and \$108 million from health care. Republican Governor Bobby Jindal says, hard decisions will have to be made within the coming weeks and months. The bottom line, he says, is that state government will simply have to tighten its belt.

By law, the governor must balance the state budget and can mandate 3 percent cuts to state agencies without legislative approval. While the governor and lawmakers figure out what they will do to handle the state's budget woes, the governor says there are two things he will not do to fix the problem: use the state's rainy day fund or raise taxes.

LORI RASMUSSEN: I'm Lori Rasmussen in Oklahoma City.

In a state where energy reigns supreme, falling oil and natural gas prices have led to a budget shortfall of more than 18 percent, the biggest budget gap in the nation. That has forced state agencies to furlough employees and eliminate programs and services. Among the casualties are deep cuts to a senior nutrition program, elimination of education and reentry programs for prison inmates, a gang prevention and intervention program that reduced drive-by shootings by as much as 61 percent, and a reduction in services to victims of domestic abuse.

Schools in Oklahoma are cutting bus routes and trimming administrative and support staff. The cuts to mental health services for low-income adults brought that agency head to tears.

TERRI WHITE, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health: All the folks who are here know that I actually do cry about these things, because these are real -- these are real people that we're looking at. And, sometimes, we miss that at the capitol. And I know that you all struggle with a lot of tough decisions, but what I want to tell you is, if this committee doesn't stand up for this agency, nobody will.

LORI RASMUSSEN: The legislature goes back into session the first week of February, and the budget will be the number-one item on the agenda.

How lawmakers will resolve the budget shortfall remains a mystery. Raising taxes is, for all practical purposes, off the table. In Oklahoma, all new taxes must be approved by a vote of the people or by a supermajority of the legislature. And that's an unlikely vote in an election year.

THANH TAN: In Boise, Idaho, I'm Thanh Tan.

The legislature is back in session and grappling with questions over the proper role of state government, especially when there's a \$40 million hole to fill just halfway through this fiscal year and possibly another \$83 million in cuts to stay out of debt next year.

GOV. BUTCH OTTER: So we're compiling a report.

THANH TAN: On Monday, inside the newly renovated capital, Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter told Idahoans they can expect no tax increase, instead, sweeping changes to state government.

GOV. BUTCH OTTER, R-Idaho: Those changes are meant to be permanent, based upon a philosophy that government that recognizes our responsibility to individual Idahoans, rather than to government itself.

THANH TAN: To save \$10 million, Otter is pushing to close the Idaho Parks and Recreation Department, in favor of a system funded by user fees and maintained by other departments.

The governor's recommendations include a four-year plan to eliminate all state funding for seven agencies and commissions, including the department I work for, Idaho Public Television.

And, for the first time, public schools face nearly \$29 million in midyear budget cuts. The handful of Democrats in this legislature oppose that proposal.

KATE KELLY, D-Idaho, Idaho senate minority leader: That means literally closing schools one day a month. And that is a huge concern at a time when we need our schools more than ever.

THANH TAN: The governor contend, education already takes up more than half the budget. There's no choice.

GOV. BUTCH OTTER: I say, where else would you have me cut?

THANH TAN: The Senate president pro tem acknowledges, this will be a contentious year.

ROBERT GEDDES, R-Idaho, Idaho senate president: We can only spend the available revenues that we have to us.

THANH TAN: He's talking about Idaho's constitutional mandate to balance the budget. It may be the key to a legislative session everyone wants to keep as short as possible.

SPENCER MICHELS: I'm Spencer Michels San Francisco.

It's Governor Schwarzenegger's last year in office, and, from all accounts, it won't be pretty. California is facing a \$20 billion budget deficit over the next 18 months, that on top of last year's even larger deficit. The governor came in to office vowing to sweep Sacramento clean and to promote bipartisanship. But most observers agree, that hasn't happened.

The governor is asking for nearly \$7 billion in federal funds. But there's no guarantee he will get it. And he is asking California's congressional delegation to vote against health care reform because he says California can't afford it.

GOV. ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, R-Calif.: It is not reform to push more costs on the states that are already struggling, while other states are getting sweetheart deals.

SPENCER MICHELS: He wants a constitutional amendment that will guarantee schools will get more money than prisons.

GOV. ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER: Spending 45 percent more on prisons than universities is no way to proceed into the future.

SPENCER MICHELS: State employees already furloughed without pay three days a month may be in for more non-paid days off.

All of this promises a continuation of the partisan battles in the legislature, which has been unable to solve the budget mess. That's because it takes a two-thirds vote of the legislature to pass a budget. And that allows the minority party, in this case, the Republicans, the ability to hold up the wheels of government.

The governor says that the recession is mostly over, but the picture for California remains bleak.

JEFFREY BROWN: And we have more about how local governments are handling the fiscal crisis on our Web site, including an interview with Susan Urahn of the Pew Center on the States.

"Absolutely disgusting what the governor is suggesting to cut public funding!! Thank you for the great daytime kids programming -- Idaho Public TV is a real godsend for me & my 3 year old!" – New Member from Boise

Idaho governor proposes phasing out statewide pubTV funding

Current.org (The newspaper and website about public TV and radio in the United States)

Jan 12, 2010

<http://current.org/>

Idaho Gov. C.L. Otter is looking to end funding for the Idaho Public Television statewide network over the next four years starting with fiscal 2011, reports the New West Boise news site. IdahoPTV, affiliated with the state board of education, gets about \$1.5 million yearly for the network, about \$1 million for salaries for 11 administrative and technical positions and \$350,000 to lease of the station's Boise facility. The governor told the Spokesman-Review newspaper he thought IdahoPTV could survive loss of the funding. "They really do have an opportunity to bring in outside money and to become self-sufficient," Otter said. Peter Morrill, IdahoPTV g.m., told New West: "We're not going to be dramatically cutting and still have a statewide system." Meanwhile, Boise Weekly said station's telephone message yesterday said, "We are unable to personally answer your telephone call at this moment due to the fact that our staff is in a staff meeting to discuss the governor's recommendation to cut funds for Idaho Public Television."

IPTV Deserves Some State Support

Eye On Boise

Spokesman Review

By Betsy Russell

January 12, 2010

Rep. Shirley Ringo, D-Moscow, asked Wayne Hammon about the proposal to eliminate state funding for Idaho Public Television over the next four years, noting that three-quarters of IPTV's budget already comes from other sources. "We have used general fund money to give them seed money, in order to be inventive and grow their budget," she said, questioning how quality programming can be maintained if further cuts are made. Hammon responded that he has "the greatest deal of respect for public television and for its director, Peter Morrill," who he said has "been able to turn pennies into dollars." Hammon said he doesn't think IPTV gets credit for all the things it does, and perhaps it should be paid for some of those. If the network provides teleprompters for the governor's speech, perhaps the governor should pay, he said. If it provides live broadcasts for the Legislature, perhaps the Legislature should pay.

JFAC Co-Chair Maxine Bell, R-Jerome, responded, "Your visit with Rep. Ringo about public broadcasting showed that they really have a right to some general funds in what they're doing - perhaps just a different way of reorganizing will help."

When government targets 'government TV'

www.idahostatesman.com

Tuesday, January 12, 2010

By Kevin Richert, Idaho Statesman

Usually, public television is above this kind of awkward, reality-show kind of confrontation.

Yet here was Wayne Hammon, Gov. Butch Otter's budget chief, arriving at Idaho Public Television for the airing of his boss' state of the state address. Minutes earlier, Hammon walked reporters through a budget that would wean public TV off of the state's general fund.

On the studio set, waiting to go on air, the tension was just a little bit higher than the norm. I felt sorry for Hammon. I also felt sorry for "Idaho Reports" anchor Thanh Tan — who professionally and even-handedly mentioned the proposed cuts during the broadcast. (This, by the way, is why I oppose a government newspaper "bailout;" I don't want to be a journalist forced to cover an agency that controls the purse strings.)

A strange broadcast, indeed. The budget proposal might not have been elephant in the room, but it was certainly the buzzard.

The public TV budget has been a perennially popular pinata around the Statehouse. But it has taken dire and desperate budget times to force the issue — and give conservatives their bright and shining opening to stop paying for something they derisively call “government TV.”

In the grander picture of things, Otter might have a point.

The phaseout of public TV — which would begin in July, by cutting the general fund budget from \$1.5 million to a shade above \$1.1 million — isn't the single most shortsighted piece of his budget plan. My vote would go to his plan to continue to cut budgets for two- and four-year schools.

Nor is it Otter's most draconian move. That “honor” goes, hands down, to the midyear \$27.9 million cut in public schools, which could force districts to drain down reserves, go into debt — and, eventually, let go of teachers.

And it's consistent with the clearance-sale approach Otter seems to be taking to state government. He seems to want user fees to bankroll what he considers the frills of government — at least when it comes to amenities such as state parks. Long-term, I suppose, the idea is that viewer support and corporate and charitable donations would replace the state dollars that comprise about a quarter of the public TV budget.

We'll see.

But since Idaho seems determined to do a poor job of funding public schools and universities — functions clearly within state government's core mission — we shouldn't be surprised to see the state try to run parks or public TV on the cheap. And frankly, as a parent, I'm a lot more worried about the school budgets.

As a dues-paying public TV supporter, I hope I still will get my money's worth. But if I were a donor in Idaho Falls or Twin Falls, cities where I used to live before moving to Boise, I'd be concerned. One way for public TV to down-size would be to scale back on its affiliates and focus on its viewer and donor base: the Treasure Valley.

But wouldn't that take the “Idaho” out of Idaho Public Television? Wouldn't that disenfranchise a lot of the “public?”

Under Otter's plan, public TV would remain “government TV.” It would operate outside the general fund budget, much like the Department of Fish and Game or the Idaho Transportation Department. That suggests that public TV remains a public asset, not just one serving a regional audience.

Privately owned media outlets — including the Statesman — have been forced to make a lot of tough budget decisions to focus on serving their core market. Public TV can't be immune from the state's budget crisis, and indeed, the station has been forced to make cuts already. But by definition, its audience is a little bit different.

Hammon says the state has looked under the rocks for savings, and now is reduced to looking for pebbles. A \$1.5 million taxpayer savings isn't small, even amidst a \$2.4 billion budget. But the onus is on Otter to demonstrate that the savings would cover the cost.

2010 State of the State address: 'We must live within our means,' Gov. Otter says

The governor outlines his plan to trim school spending, tap reserve funds and steer clear of tax increases.

BY BRIAN MURPHY - bmurphy@idahostatesman.com

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Published: 01/12/10

Idaho Gov. Butch Otter has outlined a plan to guide the state through another tough economic year with cuts to public education, consolidation of other public agencies and no additional growth in state government.

In a lengthy State of the State address Monday in the newly renovated Capitol, Otter articulated a vision of government that respects its revenue as the people's money and relies on efficiency, creativity and collaboration with private enterprise. He set the stage for more reductions in state government by highlighting his political philosophy, often couching it as native to Idahoans.

At times critical of the federal government for decisions on slickspot peppergrass and health care, Otter vowed that his budget would more closely align government with its "properly limited role."

"State government must lead by example. We must live within our means," Otter told the assembled legislators, constitutional officers, state judges and onlookers who packed House chambers. "That means finding and encouraging more efficiency, more innovation, more creativity, more collaboration and more flexibility."

And more cuts for fiscal 2010 and 2011.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS TAKE A HIT

To make it through the final six months of the current fiscal year, Otter proposed an additional \$40 million holdback - a spending cut - for state agencies, including a reduction for public education. Unlike his September holdback, which trimmed \$97.3 million from state government but used rainy-day funds to fill \$49.2 million in public education cuts, this holdback does not include any backfilling of public education.

Otter and Republicans defended the cuts by pointing to the \$318 million in rainy-day funds and federal economic-stimulus money they've already used to protect education from earlier massive cuts.

"Given the gravity of the reduction, there is no choice. We've got to include them in our budget cuts," said Meridian Sen. Russ Fulcher, the majority caucus chairman.

Otter proposed a conservative no-growth budget for 2011, despite projections from the state's chief economist that Idaho's revenues could grow by as much as \$83.4 million next year. The state has used those projections the past few years, only to have slower-than-anticipated growth and be forced to order holdbacks. Otter said it is easier to replace the money mid-year than to cut it.

He also called for keeping money in reserves - "prudence demands that we act with caution," he said - and keeping the promise to enact the next phase of a gradual, multiyear increase in the income-tax rebate for sales taxes paid on groceries, at a cost of \$15 million.

"There's just a real broad stripe of cautiousness," House Assistant Majority Leader Scott Bedke said.

DEMOCRAT: THE VISION'S WRONG

But the only declared Democrat running for governor this November said the budget proposal is needlessly conservative.

"The facts simply don't support that we have no choice but to not invest in our kids' future. We can," Keith Allred said. "What Idaho needs right now is a governor who understands Idahoans are as capable as we've ever been, and we can come barreling out of this downturn if we have the right vision."

Otter also proposed eliminating the Department of Parks and Recreation, with the Department of Lands becoming responsible for park maintenance and user fees going up. Otter said the idea is still being vetted.

The governor's 2011 budget also included the beginning of a four-year phaseout of general-fund spending for Idaho Public Television, the Digital Learning Academy and five other agencies, including Human Rights Commission, Hispanic Commission, and Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

"Whether it's public broadcasting or parks or any of the other entities, we have to look at it as to how it relates to the actual core mission of state government," said Sen. Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

"Every dollar we're spending in those areas is a dollar less we're spending in public education or a dollar less we're spending in higher education or a dollar less we're spending in Medicaid. Our dollars are not infinite. We're going to have to make decisions we normally would not make. But we're forced to because of budgetary constraints."

NO NEW TAXES, OTTER SAYS

Otter found support among Republican legislators, who have been meeting with the governor for months in an attempt to reach some consensus before the session. Last year's 116-day session, the second-longest in state history, is still fresh in everybody's mind. Otter even threw out 82 days - what he said was the average of the last 20 sessions - as a target.

Otter said Democratic legislators, with whom he also met before the session, did not offer any alternatives for state government outside of raising taxes - something Otter ruled out in his State of the State address.

"We must not raise taxes," he said. "It is not our place to impose an additional economic burden on the people of Idaho who already are struggling or to put a damper on our economic recovery."

Later, talking to reporters, Otter said: "From the other side, I heard that we could raise eight different taxes. Not one employee furloughed, not one agency combined, not one idea on how to make government more efficient. All I heard was how we could collect more taxes, and there was somebody out there that wasn't getting mugged, and we needed to get out there and get that money."

Boise Sen. Kate Kelly, the minority leader, said late last week that Democrats are in favor of tax fairness and proposed ending some tax exemptions, giving the Tax Commission enough money to increase collections, and instituting an Internet sales tax.

WORK FORCE INITIATIVES

Otter also proposed projects to prepare "for tomorrow's work force," including providing funds to handle enrollment growth at the College of Western Idaho in Nampa, funding cooperative medical education programs, funding the Center for Advanced Energy Studies in Idaho Falls and providing \$1 million in Opportunity Scholarships.

Otter's budget, however, includes a 0.55-percent decrease for community colleges.

We badly need the best and the brightest of our Idaho young people to get their educations here and stay here for productive and fulfilling careers," Otter said.

Dan Popkey: Otter the incrementalist just getting by

- Idaho Statesman

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Published: 01/12/10

Gov. Butch Otter cut his teeth in the '70s as a back-bencher determined to dismantle Big Gub-Mint. Now that he wields real power, Otter's lost his bite.

The Republican's boldest proposals in his State of the State message Monday are a \$28 million cut for public schools in the current year, a flat overall budget for 2011, and shifting Parks and Recreation duties to two other agencies, cutting 25 current employees.

"He missed an opportunity," said former Sen. Darrel Deide, chairman of Idahoans for Choice in Education, which advocates tax-supported school vouchers and tax credits for private and home schools, as well as charter and virtual schools.

"I don't think there was any real vision," added Deide, also a former Caldwell school superintendent. "There was no major policy change. It was, 'Let's maintain the status quo.' And the status quo isn't enough."

Two business leaders who head education advocacy groups - Skip Oppenheimer of the Idaho Business Coalition for Excellence in Education and Guy Hurlbutt of the Education Alliance of Idaho - said Otter did the best he could.

"If there was an alternative (to the K-12 cuts), I'd be disappointed," Hurlbutt said. "And 1.6 percent won't be devastating."

Still, Otter winced Monday as he explained the school cuts. "This is not the course that any of us would prefer to follow. It is unfortunate, but it is a temporary situation made necessary by the circumstances we face."

The reformer is dead. Instead, Otter spoke of "keeping faith" and said Idahoans have the "indomitable spirit ... to get through this - smarter, tougher and better than ever."

Yes, he recommends Idaho Public Television and six small commissions and councils lose general fund support over four years, saving \$2.5 million. But Otter's budget director's presentation to the Legislature today includes a reassuring slide: "Does not abolish agencies."

Wayne Hoffman, a former spokesman for ex-Congressman Bill Sali, now heads the Idaho Freedom Foundation, a conservative lobby. He was pleased Otter seeks to wean "government television" off tax support. "He has the willingness to make some the cuts that need to be made. But I'd like him to go further."

Hoffman wants the state to pare pensions and health benefits, institute merit pay for teachers and cut taxes so government growth doesn't rebound with the economy.

Otter was silent on a proposal by House leaders to cut personal and corporate income taxes by one-third, an omission welcomed by House Democratic Leader John Rusche of Lewiston. Rusche read Otter's applause for a stable tax structure as a signal he won't follow Hoffman's advice and cut revenue to cement a smaller state government.

But Rusche complained that Otter didn't include revenue growth projected for 2011 by the state's chief economist. "Why would you leave \$83 million on the table that your own economist says you're going to have?"

The answer to that is pretty simple. The notion of appropriating the \$83 million was floated to GOP leaders. They balked. At a meeting in Otter's office Dec. 18, his budget chief offered a "Scenario A" including the \$83 million. "Scenario B," with no increase, won their support, and Otter agreed.

Otter, now a centrist, still gets heat from the left. Dick Gardner and Richard Slaughter, economists who worked under Democratic governors, complained that he should have seized the opportunity of lean times to reform a tax code riddled with giveaways for business. A fairer system would allow meaningful investments in public and higher education and quality of life, including parks, they said.

Businesses that generate good jobs have employees who demand those services, said Slaughter. "They don't want to live in cheapville."

But Otter's optimism that good ol' Idaho stick-to-itiveness will do the trick is welcomed by Alex LaBeau, president of the the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry, Idaho's largest business lobby. "What's exciting to me is the governor has said we're going to pick up the ball and move things forward and we're going to come out better than we were before."

Otter will ask voters for a second term this year. Two of his opponents, Republican Rex Rammell and Democrat Keith Allred, roamed the Capitol looking for reporters Monday. Allred called Otter's speech a "message of decline and retreat."

Maybe.

But it's not the message of a politician who once vowed to shake government, unearth its roots and chop 'em clean. It's the message of an incrementalist who prunes carefully and hopes for the best.

Gov. Otter would phase out funds for some agencies, commissions

The change would save the state \$2.5 million per year, but could hurt vulnerable people, some say.

BY ANNA WEBB AND CYNTHIA SEWELL - awebb@idahostatesman.com csewell@idahostatesman.com

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Published: 01/12/10

Gov. Butch Otter would cut all state general fund money over four years to seven agencies: Idaho Public Television, the Human Rights Commission, the Hispanic Commission, the Independent Living Council, the Developmental Disabilities Council, the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Digital Learning Academy.

Otter said each entity would have to rely on federal and dedicated funds, as well as their own initiative.

"Idaho Public Television has a clientele, and an opportunity to bring in money and be self-sufficient," Otter said in a press conference after his State of the State address on Monday.

Peter Morrill, general manager of Idaho Public Television, said the agency receives about 25 percent of its annual \$7 million operating budget from the state and 63 percent from private contributions. The rest is federal money.

"In broad strokes, if this proposal makes it through the Legislature, IPTV will transition into a market-based public television service. We'll look at where funds come from, then focus our efforts on those areas," Morrill said.

More than 80 percent of donations to IPTV come from Southwest Idaho, he said. Rural communities could lose out.

Pamela Parks, director of the Idaho Human Rights Commission, is also exploring ways to survive.

"I'm just going to pick up every rock and see what I can find. What we do is way too important," Parks said.

The commission enforces discrimination cases, so it can't raise money from private sources because of conflicts of interest, she said.

"The majority of our state funding goes to personnel. That's where our cuts would have to be," Parks said.

Otter also wants to cluster some of the seven agencies together in state-owned office buildings to save on rent and resources.

"Lots of the agencies have the same clientele," Otter said, "so this would be efficient."

Sen. Nicole LeFavour, D-Boise, believes Otter's proposals are ideological and not about saving money.

"The state has already cut services to people with disabilities. The new proposals show a disrespect and lack of appreciation for a huge segment of the population," she said.

Our View: Otter offers a mixed, sketchy message

- Idaho Statesman

Published: 01/12/10

Short on details and long on optimism, Gov. Butch Otter presented a strange view of the state's budget crisis Monday.

On the one hand, he said, the crisis is so severe that even public schools will have to absorb some of the pain. On the other hand, a rebound is just around the corner.

Let's look further at a mixed, sketchy message:

- The public school cuts. After pouring \$318 million of reserve money and federal economic stimulus dollars into the public schools, Otter says the state can no longer spare K-12.

He is recommending a \$27.9 million cut, in the middle of an academic year, while schools have contracts in place with teachers and staff. But Otter didn't really walk parents - and teachers - through the numbers behind his recommendation. Nor did he suggest how he thinks schools should absorb a midyear cut.

This is a rough budget for public schools, and 2010-11 wouldn't be much better - a proposed \$13.6 million increase would make up less than half of the 2009-10 cuts.

- A lifeline for schools? Otter touched on one idea for cash-strapped schools: allowing districts to borrow from the state, and pay back the difference from future tax collections. Local school officials must scrutinize the details. Is this a bridge loan that will help districts through a contract year, or a payday loan that will only leave them in worse shape?

- Cuts elsewhere in education. Here's one place where Otter's rosy rhetoric doesn't match the hard budget realities. In his speech, Otter challenged lawmakers to provide funding to handle the "tremendous enrollment growth" at the College of Western Idaho. Yet Otter's 2010-11 budget proposal quietly proposes a \$138,900 cut in the community colleges' \$25.5 million budget.

Otter got his biggest applause line Monday when he praised BSU and Idaho's postseason bowl victories. But we doubt Idaho's four-year schools cheered the news of yet another budget cut - \$6.6 million from a 2009-10 budget projected to shake out at \$224.8 million.

How does Otter realistically expect higher education to deal with enrollment increases that are hardly limited to CWI? How much more of the burden will inevitably shift to students and parents?

- Parks and Rec. Otter wants to eliminate the Department of Parks and Recreation, slated to receive \$6.3 million in general fund money this year, and move its work to other agencies. Some of the budget savings will come from higher park fees. Will this adversely affect parks use? And will Otter's other consolidation plans - including a general fund phaseout for Idaho Public Television and other small public agencies - go far enough to satisfy Otter's conservative legislative allies?

- Fighting Uncle Sam. Make no mistake, this was an election year speech. Otter leavened the grim budget news with some politically safe D.C.-bashing - decrying the budgetary "sleight of hand" of health care reform, the feds' plans to make Idaho their mercury "dumping ground," and the "bureaucratic nonsense" behind a decision to add the slickspot peppergrass to the endangered species list. But when Idaho is cutting 400 state jobs and freezing salaries, does the state really have the money to beef up a legal kitty for fighting Uncle Sam?

- Is Idaho really recovering? Ever the salesman and optimist, Otter spoke about signs of economic recovery. He touted business success stories statewide. He labeled Boise-based chip giant Micron as "resurgent" - after breaking a string of 11 straight losing quarters with a recent \$204 million profit.

His staff actually assumes 3.6 percent revenue growth in 2010-11, but Otter recommends a no-growth spending plan that socks away this \$83.4 million in new revenue. Is this economic forecast realistic or not? And if lawmakers buy this forecast, should they really go along with a 2010-11 budget that cuts higher ed by 3 percent, community colleges by 0.5 percent, and gives K-12 a scant 1.1 percent increase? This could be the debate of the 2010 session.

Otter had a tough message to deliver Monday. After hinting at the need for bold change, he had a chance to offer a detailed vision for difficult times. Unfortunately for him, and for Idahoans, his speech was lacking.

"Our View" is the editorial position of the Idaho Statesman. It is an unsigned opinion expressing the consensus of the Statesman's editorial board.

Proposed cuts to Idaho Public Television draw debate Share

By Brian Murphy, Idaho Statesman

January 12, 2010

In his budget proposal, Gov. Butch Otter proposed a four-year phase out of general fund dollars to Idaho Public Television. The proposal has gotten plenty of attention in the 24 hours since.

Otter said several times Monday that IPTV has a private constituency that should be able to sustain the network. His chief budget officer echoed those sentiments during a meeting with the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee on Tuesday.

"It's time for that constituency, if it's a service worth providing than the people that benefit from it should help save it," Hammon said.

Hammon added, however, that IPTV provides services to the state government that it does not get paid for, such as teleprompters for the State of the State or televising the state Legislature.

"Perhaps we need to find a source to pay them. Maybe governor's office ought to pay them. Maybe the legislature ought to be paying them for that," Hammon said.

Rep. Maxine Bell said those instances and others “showed they have a right to some general fund in what they’re doing.”

Rep. Shirley Ringo, D-Moscow, defended IPTV, too. “It seems to be something of a Hail Mary to expect them to go even further in that direction (private money) and in any way maintain the quality programming that we have.”

Email from Colleen Fellows
January 12, 2010
Re: Legislative coffee chats

You weren’t kidding. Eliminate general funds in 4 years!?? In effect, will this shut down IPTV across the state? Could it even function in Boise, be it with old “less expensive” programing? I would venture a guess that in reality, the gradual reduction over 4 years will in effect lead to statewide loss in less time than that due to threshold operating costs.

I would love to start a drive around the state for kids to draw pictures of Sesame Street characters and take their Elmo and Big Bird stuffed toys to Gov. Otter’s office with the slogan, “Please Don’t Kill Elmo”. The next endangered species in Idaho are the Big Bird, Elmo, Grover and Cookie Monster. I think regardless of people’s feelings about the relevance of IPTV, their kids have watched Sesame Street, and now their grandchildren do. That might be the one thing that brings more people together regardless of age or income.

I’d love to hear if you have any ideas on addressing this. I fully understand the position you are in as an IPTV employee. I would love to find Republicans that feel Public TV is important and needs help. It will be an uphill climb on the other side of the isle without them.

There is certainly going to be an outcry from the numerous groups on the chopping block. I can’t fathom the elimination of Parks and Rec. Worst case senario, it would be better to fold Department of Lands into Parks and Rec. than the other way around. In any case, the numerous commissions and departments will be scrambling for that last scrap of funding and will be forced to point fingers at the other to save themselves.

Editorial: Maybe there were worse days for Idaho; we can’t think of any

Twin Falls Times News
Tuesday, January 12, 2010

Monday, Jan. 11, set a new standard for Idaho: We, as a state, pulled the plug on our kids. As detailed in Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter’s State of the State Address, here’s what happened:

- The governor recommended cutting \$138 million from the state public school budget, on top of the \$68 million that was trimmed this year. Said Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna: “Education is economic development, and we have to ensure that we don’t do long-term damage because it will have an impact on the economy.”

Luna told the Spokesman-Review of Spokane, Wash., that the Legislature “is going to have to immediately draft legislation that gives districts ultimate flexibility” to cope with the cuts, including an unprecedented \$27.9 million in cuts this year.

The governor aims to use most of the \$275 million remaining in reserve funds this year and in 2011 to help limit the depth of his austerity measures.

Otter proposed shielding Idaho's 115 school districts from a 4 percent holdback he ordered in September by using public education reserves. If school districts don't have enough local reserve money to meet contract obligations this year, Otter said, they'll be able to borrow it from the state but have to dip into their share of 2011 funding to pay it back.

In other words, this year or next the budget in your school district — not the neighboring school district, not somebody else's school district — is likely to be cut. Teachers may lose their jobs, classes will be slashed. Or both.

Already, minority Democrats are criticizing Otter for a budget that doesn't include an additional \$82 million in tax revenue that the governor's chief economist, Mike Ferguson, forecasts will be collected during the course of 2011 as Idaho's economy emerges from the recession.

House Minority Leader John Rusche, D-Lewiston, accused Otter of taking advantage of the poor economy to pursue ideological goals of reducing government — at the cost of necessary services.

"It's basically politics over people," Rusche said. "We're going to cram kids like sardines into classrooms, all to preserve \$82 million."

We all recognize the extraordinary circumstances that prompted Otter to make such recommendations. But we don't have to like it, and none of us should consider it acceptable.

- The proposed livestock research center in south-central Idaho is now officially in jeopardy. The governor has proposed delaying the state's \$10 million appropriation.
- Otter is proposing gutting public television over the next four years — that's a 50-year-old institution that touches the lives of a majority of Idahoans.
- It's unclear whether there will be a Thousand Springs State Park a year from now, but the governor proposed folding management responsibilities at the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation into the Idaho Department of Lands and the Department of Fish and Game.

Nobody — from the most conservative Idahoan to the school teacher or the state employee who is about to lose his or her job — should consider any of this acceptable. We have a venerable tradition in the Gem State of taking care of our own.

And now we can't.

Email from Steve Stuebner
January 12, 2010
Subject: holy crap!

"Boy, Butch sure trotted out the meat cleaver didn't he! Hate these guys who try to get rid of the good things in our state government ... guess he's never had a better opportunity ..."

IdahoPTV Not Answering the Phone this Afternoon

Boise Weekly

By Nathaniel Hoffman

January 11, 2010

I just called Peter Morrill, director of Idaho Public Television, to discuss Gov. Otter's four-year plan to phase out state funding for the agency and got this message:

"We are unable to personally answer your telephone call at this moment due to the fact that our staff is in a staff meeting to discuss the governor's recommendation to cut funds for Idaho Public Television."

We'll talk to Morrill later on, but we asked Otter at his post-SOS press conference if he and First Lady Lori Otter were supporters of public television. He was not sure, but Lori Otter confirmed that they are not members of Idaho PTV, and she said they do not watch the station either.

Gov. Otter said: "I think it has a lot of value but I also think it has a lot of constituency that's willing to support it."

Morrill told NewWest.net (before going into his staff meeting) that they do have a lot of member funding, but that 82 percent of contributions come from Southwest Idaho, so in the absence of state support, that is where their focus would become.

We're not going to be dramatically cutting and still have a statewide system," Morrill told NewWest.

As for the numbers, Otter is recommending a 27 percent reduction (\$409,700) to IdahoPTV's state support this year and for the following three years. Morrill also told NewWest.net that the loss of state funds could affect some federal grants, costing the station even more.

Otter is also asking lawmakers to phase out state support for the Hispanic, Independent Living, Developmental Disabilities, Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Human Rights commissions, and told reporters that the commissions have already begun consolidation. They plan to move the commissions into the Borah Building, on State Street and consolidate office functions.

"Remember, a lot of the clientele for Aging, for the Human Rights Commission, for the Hispanic Commission, for assisted living, for those five, six agencies that we're looking at, a lot of them have the same clientele. This way it's a one-stop-shop," Otter said.

Otter is also planning to eliminate the Department of Parks and Recreation, though he has given Parks Director Nancy Merrill an opportunity to figure out her own funding source ... she has about a month to come up with a plan. Otherwise, the Parks department functions will be taken over by the Department of Lands and Fish and Game. The \$6.3 million agency is zeroed out in Otter's 2011 budget.

Sen. Robert Geddes on changes to Idaho Public Television: (interviewed by Marcia Franklin)

I have mixed emotions about some of those. Obviously public TV is something we depend on to reach the far reaching corners of our state and to allow our rural counties to be involved in the news and the legislative process-- and just used as an educational tool. I would encourage all the citizens of Idaho to realize that if general funding revenue will not be available, than we as citizens must step up to protect those agencies and departments and especially public television to allow you good folks to continue doing what you do.

They do, and just because the department or the agency may be on the target for phasing out, doesn't mean we'll lose sight of the need to represent those folks who need extra attention and care.

One thing about it is we won't have to fight over money. Or if we do, it'll be over money we don't have.

Press Conference: Governor Butch Otter on the elimination of Parks & Rec and cutting IdahoPTV:
January 11, 2010

What we're looking for is efficiencies in accounting and as we combine those together. And I'm telling you all the due diligence isn't done on it yet.

One of the things I've asked the new parks director Nancy Merrill and board to do is to move toward self-sufficiency and out of the state fund.

The user fee base, user pay I should say, is something that as long as an agency or a service of government is directed toward a specific use or a specific clientele, I see no problem in making that self-sufficient.

On the governor's decision to set a budget \$82 million below the revenue forecast:

I have a great deal of respect for Mike Ferguson and all the people who have an input in Mike's numbers, but let's take a look in three years. I've used that as my sole directive. Mike does the best job with the information he's got, I just think we've over-guessed the last few years and I'd rather go back and do a supplemental when the legislature goes back to town than do these uncertain holdbacks.

Rep. Scott Bedke:

You know, there's just a real broad stripe of cautiousness that goes through the economic outlook committee and most of the house.

It's easier to backfill than to cut.

Gov Otter on IdahoPTV and commissions:

Those are totally two separate motivations. One is Idaho public television really has an opportunity. They have a clientele they service. and they have an opportunity to bring in outside money and become self-sufficient.

On commissions consolidating:

This way they have one receptionist. One copy machine. There's just a lot of efficiencies.

On how he decided on mid-year cuts to public education:

For four months, I sat down with the leadership from both sides of the aisle. And I said here's the problem we're coming into. What's your ideas. From this group, I heard let's put some agencies together.... from the other side, I heard that we can raise eight different taxes. Not one employee furloughed, agency combined, or make government efficient.

So I'm saying to you what I generally say to those folks who say why are you cutting education? I say where else would you have me cut?

You know I don't like the idea of cutting 1.6% from schools, but I know a lot of teachers, and I know they want what's best. And I don't think you're going to see them back off from their professionalism and their ability to deliver the best education in their classroom.

On Idaho Public Television: (Nathaniel asks whether he likes IdahoPTV, then whether he's a member. The governor consults his wife and responds.)

I've supported them in the past. I think it has a lot of value, but it has a lot of constituency to support it, and if we have to do something in our tax structure that says what you give to public television has an enhanced tax credit or something such as that-- we'll do it. And remember this is a four year effort. We're going to do what we can to help them get self sufficient. and going through this first year there's going to be a lot of lessons learned about whether we can or can't do it.

Otter outlines Idaho budget full of cuts Governor declares he won't raise taxes

January 11, 2010 in Idaho

By Betsy Z. Russell, Idaho Spokesman Review

betsyr@spokesman.com

- No tax increases.
- A \$40 million budget cut right away, including a \$27.9 million cut to schools; that's 1.6 percent statewide, on top of 4 percent trimmed in September.
- For next year, a \$14.3 million cut in public school funding. Otter proposed spending \$83.4 million less than his economists say the state will bring in, just in case.
- Eliminating all state funding for the state Department of Parks and Recreation, increasing park fees and merging the department with the state Department of Lands.
- Cutting 400 state jobs, many of which already are vacant.
- Phasing out all state funding for Idaho Public Television and several smaller agencies over the next four years, forcing those agencies to rely on other funds.
- Spending all but \$32.8 million of the state's budget reserves by the end of next year.

BOISE - Gov. Butch Otter laid out a grim budget proposal for Idaho on Monday, calling for cutting public education both this year and next, slashing 400 state jobs, phasing out state funding for Idaho Public TV over the next four years and more.

"To those folks who say, 'Why are you cutting education?' I say, where else would you have me cut?" a frustrated Otter said after his State of the State message to a joint session of the Legislature.

House Education Chairman Bob Nonini, R-Coeur d'Alene, said, "We all know it's a tough time. ... I think we're going to see a lot more districts declaring financial emergencies."

Otter proposed a state budget for next year that spends \$83.4 million less than state economists expect from tax revenues.. "I just think that we've over-guessed the last few years," he said. GOP legislative leaders said they, too, are skeptical about state tax revenues. "There's just a real broad stripe of cautiousness," said House Assistant Majority Leader Scott Bedke.

Minority Democrats decried the plan. "It's not even status quo - it's going backwards," said Senate Minority Leader Kate Kelly, D-Boise. Rep. George Sayler, D-Coeur d'Alene, a retired high school teacher, said, "Further cuts like this I think could have a real impact on what goes on in the classroom."

But Rep. George Eskridge, R-Dover, said, "I'm not liking it, but I think we've got to do it."

Idaho's tax revenues have lagged with the recession, and Otter declared that he won't raise taxes. "It is not our place to impose an additional economic burden on the people of Idaho who already are struggling, or to put a damper on our economic recovery," he told lawmakers.

State Superintendent of Schools Tom Luna said he'll try to help the Legislature find ways to make the cuts without hurting student achievement, but warned, "Education is economic development, and we have to ensure that we don't do long-term damage because it will have an impact on the economy."

Luna said if the state is going to cut school funding, it needs to "immediately" enact legislation giving local school districts more flexibility on how they make the cuts.

Said Nonini, "The tough part is 85 percent of those budgets are wages and benefits for teachers."

Otter and GOP legislative leaders have reached a deal to let school districts that can't handle this year's mid-year budget cut borrow from state reserves, and then pay the money back out of their state budget for next year. But Nonini said that seems impossible when next year's budget, too, is being cut. Otter also proposed putting a \$10 million livestock research center on hold; and moving \$71 million from the state's tobacco settlement fund into a backup fund to cover Medicaid, if federal matching rates aren't adjusted. They're now scheduled to drop precipitously unless Congress acts.

Governor Otter: Cut education, public TV, research center

By JOHN MILLER

Associated Press Writer

January 11, 2010

BOISE, Idaho (AP) -- Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter aims to balance Idaho's budget by cutting another \$40 million from this year's spending by trimming public education and delaying cash for a livestock research center near Twin Falls that was due to get \$10 million.

The Republican, who gave his State of the State speech Monday to open the 2010 Legislature, also would slash 400 state jobs, raise Idaho state parks fees and eliminate state funding to Idaho Public Television and six more agencies by 2014.

He won't boost taxes, as minority Democrats suggested, to help augment Idaho tax revenue amid the worst economic downturn in 40 years.

"It is not our place to impose an additional economic burden on the people of Idaho who already are struggling, or to put a damper on our economic recovery," Otter said to applause from majority GOP House and Senate members inside the newly refurbished Capitol.

For fiscal year 2011, he proposed a budget of \$2.46 billion, down from the original \$2.5 billion appropriation for the current year ending June 30.

Lawmakers still must weigh in on Otter's proposals. Democrats quickly criticized the governor for a budget that doesn't include an additional \$82 million in tax revenue that his chief economist, Mike Ferguson, forecasts will be collected in 2011 as Idaho's economy emerges from the recession.

Otter said the recovery is too uncertain. But House Minority Leader John Rusche, D-Lewiston, accused Otter of taking advantage of the poor economy to pursue ideological goals of reducing government at the cost of necessary services.

"It's basically politics over people," Rusche said.

Republicans praised Otter's budget for prudence, pointing out they've been forced to cut Idaho's budget multiple times since 2008 during the middle of the year because tax revenue deteriorated.

"One of the things we've learned, it's easier to add money to budgets than it is to deal with holdbacks," said Sen. Dean Cameron, R-Rupert, chairman of the Joint Finance-Appropriations Budget setting committee.

The governor would use most of \$275 million in reserve funds this year and in 2011.

Otter has proposed shielding Idaho's 115 school districts from a 4 percent holdback he ordered in September by using public education reserves.

Still, he wants schools to cover all of a separate \$27 million, midyear 2010 cut by using their own rainy day accounts, a plan which GOP leaders in the House and Senate support. This would be the first midyear cut ever to schools, his finance chief, Wayne Hammon, told reporters before the governor's speech.

If districts don't have sufficient local reserves to meet contract obligations this year, they'd be able to borrow money from the state but would have to dip into 2011 funding to pay back any loans. After Otter's speech, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said he'll push to give school district administrators more flexibility to meet the reductions, including by modifying teachers' contracts.

"We have to find a way for schools to do more with less," Luna told reporters.

Under Otter's plan for the Department of Parks and Recreation, which oversees 30 state parks, management duties would be folded into the Idaho Department of Lands and the Department of Fish and Game. His office estimates this, along with fee hikes, could bring \$10 million savings to taxpayers.

Of the 400 state jobs Otter aims to eliminate, most are already vacant.

It was unclear how many of the jobs could be cut at Idaho Public Television, which employs about 58 part-time and 54 full-time employees, according to the state controller's office. Under Otter's plan, public TV's annual general fund appropriation of about \$1.7 million would be eliminated over the next four years.

Peter Morrill, the general manager, would have to find alternative sources of funding through federal grants or private donations to keep his station afloat.

Morrill was meeting with staff late Monday and couldn't be reached for comment.

Other agencies where state funding will be eliminated under Otter's plan: the Human Rights Commission, Hispanic Commission, Independent Living Council, Developmental Disabilities Council, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Council and Digital Learning Academy. They, too, would have to find new sources of cash.

"Those changes are meant to be permanent - based on a philosophy of government that recognizes our responsibility to individual Idahoans rather than to government itself," Otter said.

And Otter wants to delay giving \$10 million to the University of Idaho's proposed livestock research center. That's after industry raised just a fraction of a promised \$5 million and after the UI's plan to sell state land to finance a \$20 million share fell victim to plunging property values.

Report: Idaho Gov. Otter's State of the State speech

Idaho Budget Cuts Include Public Television and Parks

Otter proposes to phase out five commissions as well as Idaho Public Television.

By Sharon Fisher, January 11, 2010

www.newwest.org

Governor C.L. "Butch" proposed a budget for fiscal year 2011 with a reduction of more than 10 percent from the general fund, including the elimination of the Department of Parks and Recreation as well as a phaseout over four years of the Human Rights Commission, the State Independent Living Council, the Developmental Disabilities Council, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission, the Hispanic Commission, and Idaho Public Television.

"These changes are meant to be permanent – based on a philosophy of government that recognizes our responsibility to individual Idahoans rather than to government itself," Otter said about the budget, which also eliminates 430 state jobs, 375 of which he said are already vacant.

Parks and Rec had requested \$35 million for fiscal year 2011, which starts on July 1, 2010, and runs through June 30, 2011. The maintenance of state parklands will be performed by the State Department of Lands, while the fees collected will go to the Department of Fish and Game, according to state budget documents. There are more than 150 staffers in the department. Last year, including reapportionment, the agency received slightly over \$46 million. "The combination will result in fiscal year savings of \$10 million with ongoing savings of \$7 million annual," according to the Governor's budget documents. "The goal is to ensure the continued operation of Idaho parks for residence and visitors."

Idaho Public Television receives about \$1.5 million per year, which is for the maintenance and administration of the statewide system, said general manager Peter Morrill. In addition, because some of the station's funding comes from \$4 million in federal grants to buy equipment that the station may no longer be able to maintain, Idaho Public Television may be in a position to have to pay back some of those federal grants, meaning cuts could be more severe than the 25 percent suggested for 2011, he said.

Of the \$1.5 million, approximately \$1 million is for salaries for 11 administrative and technical positions, and \$350,000 is for lease of the station's Boise facility. "We're not going to be dramatically cutting and still have a statewide system," Morrill said. Because 82 percent of the station's contributions come from southwest Idaho, if the budget is enacted, it is likely that it will need to focus on that geographic area, he said.

The Hispanic Commission, which has four employees, is proposed to be cut by about \$25,000 and one employee. The Human Rights Commission, with 11 staffers, had a recommendation from the Governor for \$675,000, after its request of \$900,000. The State Independent Living Council, with 14 staffers, is recommended to be cut to 6 staff, and have its budget cut from \$970,000 to \$810,000.

Otter's address to the joint session of the Legislature, which included the obligatory shout-out to the Broncos and the Vandals, also applauded a number of growing companies throughout Idaho, and saying the state was reaching out to other companies to encourage them to move here. In addition, after the Governor's series of summits with the business, innovation, and banking communities, he will be submitting a series of reports to the Legislature's germane committees on ideas from these groups, including eliminating the personal property tax, tax credits for infrastructure construction, a home buyer tax credit such as the one offered in Utah, and improvements in technology transfer.

Other items of note in the budget include:

- * the use of \$241 million in rainy-day funds, including the Millennium Fund
 - * the continuing of the planned implementation of the grocery tax credit
 - * \$1 million in Opportunity Scholarships
 - * \$1 million to continue implementing the Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan
 - * \$900,000 to combat invasive milfoil
 - * No employee salary increases
 - * No inflationary adjustments or replacement capital
 - * Consolidate of statewide information technology services at the Department of Administration, which had been slated to be removed a couple of years ago, including the transfer of employees from seven different agencies into the Department of Administration
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Guv fields questions after his speech

Eye On Boise

By Betsy Russell, Idaho Spokesman Review

<http://www.spokesman.com/blogs/boise/>

January 11, 2010

Gov. Butch Otter, answering questions from reporters in his office after his State of the State message, acknowledged that he's set his proposed budget for next year at \$83.4 million less than his economists expect from state tax revenues. "I just think that we've overguessed the last few years," Otter said. He said he'd rather go in and replace money later with supplemental appropriations, than have to make more mid-year cuts. GOP legislative leaders said they, too, are skeptical about state tax revenues. "There's just a real broad stripe of cautiousness," said House Assistant Majority Leader Scott Bedke.

Otter also said his proposed elimination of the state Department of Parks and Recreation isn't a sure thing; "right now ... it's conceptual," he said. And he said he thought Idaho Public Television could survive his proposed four-year phase-out of state funding. "They really do have an opportunity to bring in outside money and to become self-sufficient," he said.

Otter said, "To those folks who say, 'Why are you cutting education?' I say, Where else would you have me cut?" He said he believes dedicated teachers will still deliver good education, and local districts will do all they can.