

**Comments of David Eubanks
Trustee, School District 271
Excerpted From Trustee's Report
Board of Trustees Meeting
March 3, 2014**

[Excerpt begins at approximate time stamp 01:18:21 on thumb drive , file label "SD-271 3-3-14 Pt 1.mp4".]

Eubanks: Secondly, I'd like to comment on, and I'll get through this as quickly as I can, I'd like to share with you my perspective, my opinion, on the Day on the Hill. One...uh...well, it actually wasn't just a day on the Hill, it was the better part of two days on the Hill last Monday and Tuesday.

This was an opportunity for Chairman Hearn, Vice-Chairman Hazel, myself, Superintendent Handelman, and our Communications Director, Laura Rumpler, to connect with and to speak speak directly to our local legislators and others about the needs of the Coeur d'Alene School District and its 10,400 children.

Mrs. Seymour was going to be with us, but she was unavailable due to health reasons, and Mr. Hamilton was, um, suffering was suffering in Hawaii or something. Correct? [laughter]

In any case, um, day, uh, our Day on the Hill more than 200 school board Trustees and Superintendents from every part of Idaho were there, along with the, uh, leadership of the Idaho School Boards Association. [distorted] of them came from Priest River, Wallace, or St. Maries; from Caldwell; from downtown Boise; from Meridian, Salmon, and even the little town of Oneida on the border near Utah.

The burning issue for all was one in the same: the lack of sufficient funding from our state Legislature. Stories abounded of district and building budgets slashed to the bone – and then some; of low pay for teachers, driving too many out of the profession and out of the state; too few counselors in the schools; too many kids in the classroom; the need for more computers; more non-fiction reading materials; more professional development time for teachers to address the demands of the new Idaho Core, and more. Those school districts unable to pass a supplemental levy, we were told, have had a had to drastically cut programs and personnel and are currently hanging on by the barest of financial threads. A few are actually on the verge of shutting down.

Fortunately, here in the Coeur d'Alene School District, we haven't had that problem -- we haven't had that problem, uh, to any great extent – thanks to our voters and our local property taxpayers who helped carry us through these recent difficult times. And for that, we are profoundly grateful. Yet all of us understand full well that passage of such levies, such supplemental levies, every two years is anything but assured.

One common theme heard repeatedly from a wide array of Trustees, Superintendents, and the leadership of the ISBA – the Idaho School Boards Association – was that with so much

funding for Idaho public schools cut by the Legislature in the past few years, \$600,000,000 by one account, [clears throat] excuse me, supplemental levies have actually become essential levies. And that is why this year's so-called Day on the Hill was so important for everyone who attended.

I'd like to tell you that we were indeed able to meet with all of our local elected representatives gathered in Boise, but I can't. With the exception of Senators Goedde and Nonini and Representative Morse, our [distorted] and area legislators made no time for us whatsoever. It was as if we weren't even there. Now, I don't know why we were so disregarded, but I have a few possible explanations. Maybe they don't like us. Uh, that's one. Number two: Maybe they were just so darned busy that they really couldn't find so much as five whole minutes in two days' time to talk with us. Number three – and this for me is most likely – I think ... I think they might have been embarrassed to face us, considering their signature legislative accomplishment for the children of Idaho has been to make funding for Idaho public schools – which is to say the number of dollars spent per year per student – the absolute worst in the entire country. Yeah, we're now fiftieth out of all fifty states. The bottom of the barrel. The lowest of the low in such critical funding. Now, I don't mean to insult anybody, and this is just my opinion, but I think time has come for a non-partisan, blunt observation or two.

When you're fiftieth out of fifty in just about any of life's endeavors, you've missed the boat. In fiftieth out of fifty, dead last, especially when it comes to helping prepare our children to meet the challenges of the future, is simply appalling. So I have a personal challenge for those legislators with whom we were unable to meet, and it is the following: In funding public education in Idaho, we need a new number, a low ordinal number, and since we can't go any lower than fiftieth, how about putting some serious effort toward getting us to forty-something. Forty-something. Or maybe even something in the thirties.

And again, this is personal, but instead of spending millions in tax breaks to bribe out-of-state businesses to come to Idaho with the promise of abundant cheap labor – which, by the way, is exactly what they do in third-world countries – why not spend those millions to help us dramatically transform and improve our public schools to meet the challenges of this century. If we try to make Idaho public schools our top priority, if we could vault them into the top ten nation wide, I doubt we'd have to bribe any company or anyone to relocate here. Terrific schools for all our children, a well-educated workforce, Idahoans themselves well-prepared to innovate and create thousands of new companies and businesses. This is a reality sitting on our doorstep right now. We simply have to muster the strength, the determination, and most of all the leadership to open that door and invite it in.

Thank you.

[Eubanks concludes his Day on the Hill report.]