

March 9, 2006

STATE BOARD SUPPORTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMPROMISE BILL

BOISE - The State Board of Education voted overwhelmingly in support of proposed legislation calling for the creation of a statewide network of community colleges.

The proposed compromise bill combines the elements of the Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne's plan as well as Representative Ann Rydalch and Senator John Goedde's legislation. All three elected leaders are supportive of this new proposal.

"This is the ideal time to move forward on community colleges. We have the resources; we have the interest; and we have a workable concept," said Rod Lewis, President of the State Board of Education. "We look forward to working with the Legislature to create more opportunities for students to attend higher education in Idaho."

The proposed bill is still in draft form, but concepts presented to the board include:

- The Board would be authorized to establish new community colleges in the various regions in the state. Local county funding drawn from liquor tax proceeds would be utilized as well as state funding from the appropriations process.
- The Board would administer a grant process to expand services.
- Idaho colleges and universities would make plans to expand services within their service areas. In order for these proposals to be funded, institutions would need to commit to charge lower tuition rates, offer community college level academic and professional-technical classes, work on small business development issues, and submit a plan on how to sustain services.

The community college expansion is proposed to be funded with \$5 million in state funds, including \$3.5 million in on-going general fund dollars and \$1.5 million in one-time money. It is anticipated the \$3.5 million in new funding would grow over time to support the expanded services.

The bill is expected to be sent to the House Education Committee next week once the proposed bill is finalized.