

From: Rep. Steven Thayn
Concerning: Roads, Taxes, and Social Spending

Dear Friend;

The legislature has come under criticism for not raising taxes by \$240 million for roads. First, I want you to know that there is enough money in the transportation budget to pay for four lanes of freeway between Meridian and the Garrity interchange. This will greatly reduce the commute time between Caldwell and Boise.

Second, some seem to believe that more spending is the only solution to solve any problem.

- Crime problem; more money.
- Drug abuse; more money.
- Students are not doing well in school; more money.
- Roads; more money.

I maintain that it is time reevaluate how the State budget is used. Consider:

Example #1: Health and Welfare and Corrections are consuming more and more of the state budget.

Budget year	Corrections	Health and Welfare	Total Budget
1988	2.6 percent	12.1 percent	14.7 percent
2009	7.3 percent	19.8 percent	27.1 percent

This is an increase of 12.4 percent of the total budget that is going to these areas. The total budget is \$2.959 billion so 12.4 percent represents \$370 million. This is where our road money is going. If we could reduce our social problems to 1988 levels, we would have \$370 million to use on roads. No tax increase needed.

Example #2: Utah spends \$1700 per student less than Idaho on public schools. If we could improve education while reducing costs by \$1,000 per student that would be another \$261 million.

Example #3: The United States incarcerates 702 per 100,000 of population while Canada only incarcerates 116 per 100,000 and Germany 91 per 100,000. If we reduced our prison population to the levels of Canada, Idaho could save another \$150 million per year. There are other solutions besides incarceration to hold nonviolent offenders accountable.

The taxpayers are already burdened by taxes. I don't believe we can spend ourselves out of our infrastructure needs; **we need to save ourselves out of our infrastructure needs**. The examples above catalogue \$781 million in potential savings. Surely, we can save a mere \$200 million by innovative thinking.

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