

Wayne Hoffman: Welcome to another episode of the Hoff Time Report. I'm Wayne Hoffman, president of the Idaho Freedom Foundation and I welcome you to this broadcast. Today in this episode, I talk with Senator Stephen Thayne for Emmett. He's the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee and as a result, he is a key voice on education policy in the State House. In our chat, we talked about education choice, we discussed social justice in our colleges and universities, and also the status of Idaho's common core replacement. I hope you enjoy today's program.

Senator Stephen Thayne, who is the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee now. Known Steven for a long time. Helped him with, I want to say it was your first campaign, was probably your second campaign for office if I remember right in the middle 2000s.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Probably the second one.

Wayne Hoffman: Second campaign, the one that you won. That's the most important detail, right?

Senator Stephen Thayne: The one that I won.

Wayne Hoffman: The one you won, I helped you with. Anyway, thank you for being here because you have a lot of stuff going on in the education committee. And why don't we just get started with what's happening in the K-12 education system? What is the number one priority for you as the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee this year?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, the number one priorities for me is parent choice because if we get parents involved in the system and they take more responsibility to see their kids are educated, then we can get more bang for our buck without spending a ton more money. And the way you get parents involved is by giving them choices.

Wayne Hoffman: So what's that going to look like?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, there are several choice bills out there that we could talk about. One of them is a Innovative Classroom Bill. So that states if parents of 24 elementary students come together and they don't like the curriculum, like their science curriculum or the math curriculum of the school district, they can petition the school district to have an alternative curriculum. And the school district will provide a teacher in a classroom and they'll teach the curriculum the parents choose.

Wayne Hoffman: Okay. And I suppose there's other, you're looking at an education savings account program as well, I understand?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yeah. I'm not writing that bill, but there's, there's a bill coming through that will for example, the governor had a strong family, strong students program this summer than fall with federal funds and there's some legislators writing bill to expand that or to actually codify with state funds and keep that going. So parents can have a little bit of money if they need a tutor or something like that curriculum so they can improve their child's education.

Wayne Hoffman: What are they the odds of getting these done? I do understand there are a lot of dynamics at play here between COVID, the Blaine Amendment being erased by virtue of the Espinoza decision, the US Supreme Court last year, and some general frustration about the way in which school

districts are being managed. It seems as if there's a lot at play, more so in previous years. What kind of odds do you give?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, there's five bills that I think are significant. I think there's a good chance all of them will pass. So what they are is the ESA bill. Part of that bill is a micro grant type bill. So it's patent after the governor's approach. So he's already done it. I don't know why people would complain about it. The Innovative Classroom Bill that gives parents choice in curriculum. A high school workforce, readiness high school diploma allows students to focus more on vocational skills in high school and get a high school diploma. Then there's a, if I can remember them all, I should have them written down. There's two others; one has to do with Elementary Flexibility Bill. So if a student gets advanced and the parents can negotiate a flexible attendance to schools. They'll get paid, but the parents can create a home school/public school mix so they can do more of the teaching at home. So it just gives parents some flexibility. And there's one other, and for right now, I can't remember what that is.

Wayne Hoffman: So what are the things, the obstacles standing in the way of some of these ideas getting through and I guess who are the obstacles, I should also ask?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, the number one obstacle, which is why I have been fascinated in education for 25 years is there's two views of education. The dominant view is that the state of Idaho or any state is responsible to see the child is educated. The constitution doesn't say that. The constitution says we're to provide an education system.

Wayne Hoffman: Right.

Senator Stephen Thayne: But a lot of people think it's the state's responsibility. It isn't. But those that think it's the state's responsibility, if you give a choice to a parent over curriculum or time in school, or, you know, how they approach it, then even a mini grant proposal, then they're feeling like you're taking money away from the system. Well, to me, the system is supposed to serve parents. Parents aren't supposed to serve the system. So we have a fundamental change we need to undergo, which is the education system needs view itself as a service organization and ask parents what resources they need, what services they need, and then provide them.

If we would've had this attitude years ago, we would have responded much differently to common core, for example. But the number obstacle is this idea that it's the state's responsibility. So you find the Idaho Education Association some legislators are lined up in that line, but we're moving more and more to recognize that parents are not the enemy here. The homeschooling movement, for example, in the 1980s was one of the first big steps to break the monopoly of public education because untrained parents are getting wonderful results if they engage, you know, if they have discipline and they find good curriculum. So we know that parents are the primary reason that kids succeed in any school system, public, private, homeschool. But changing the idea that parents are the solution, not the problem is the biggest obstacle and those that hold that belief system.

Wayne Hoffman: I find it endlessly fascinating that the three things our state constitution calls for when it comes to education is that it be free, which of course it's impossible, the language behind that is somewhat interesting, thorough and uniform. Those are the things that our founding fathers wanted for our education system. I would hope that one of the things we'd want out of our education system is excellence. Do we have that now and if not, how far away are we from that?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, let me digress a little bit because the part of the state constitution you quoted is after the part it says the purpose for education.

Wayne Hoffman: True.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Which is to establish a Republican form of government or to maintain a Republican form of government. I would say our current education system is failing in its constitutional duty. We should have a class entitled the failures of socialism throughout history. We don't have that class.

Wayne Hoffman: And in fact, our schools, you can correct me if you feel this is not accurate, seem to espouse the virtues of socialism.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yes, if not overtly, covertly because the public education system is socialism.

Wayne Hoffman: True.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Now we differ on probably if we should have a public education system, since we have one, that's what I'm trying to improve. The thing about socialism if you really analyze what it is, socialism centralizes the responsibility in the hands of a few. So they control the choices and they control the resources to fulfill that responsibility. I maintain, we need to transfer the responsibility back to parents that want it 'cause not all parents want it, but those that want it should have more choices. They should have some access to some resources. So to me, it's about moving the responsibility back. It's not so much about if we have a public education system or not, it's who's ultimately responsible to see kids are educated.

Wayne Hoffman: But why couldn't that be part of the conversation? I mean, in 1890, the conversation was we need to have an education system because we need to have an educated society to maintain the republic and that system should be free, thorough and uniform. Is there anything wrong with in 2021 or beyond having a conversation that says maybe a system that's run by the government, especially in an era when the sum total of all human knowledge is a cell phone away isn't really necessary anymore.

Senator Stephen Thayne: I think we can have the discussion. For example, in Europe, there's many countries that have state funded education and they have a state system, but they also fund other choices. And there's a lot of difference between the state funded system and a state run system. Now, I don't think Idahoans are quite ready for that yet, but I wouldn't have talked about this 10 years ago. I can talk about it now, so we are moving.

Wayne Hoffman: Well, you're correct. And I remember when I was working on a Tom Luna's second campaign for Superintendent of Public Instruction, and he was still trying to extricate himself from having said in 2002 that he supported vouchers. And that was just a kiss of death. Fast forward today and you can have a legitimate conversation about vouchers or education savings accounts, or other forms of education choice that maybe weren't even possible 20 years ago, let alone 50 years ago.

Senator Stephen Thayne: And I think this has happened one, two things. I'd like people to recognize that the discussion has been changing over time and it started with the homeschool movement. You know, the second thing is which I've probably forgotten already and I ate lunch too. Yeah, I don't remember what the second thing was. I'm sorry.

Wayne Hoffman: Well, that's okay. I'm sure you'll think of it. We'll come back to it, but let me ask you, if we're going to fix the education system, how much of that would require, would necessitate giving school board some of their powers back? And we saw some of that power play during this, I call it the so-called pandemic. I don't want to necessarily get you into an argument about a pandemic or not, but school boards who are frustrated because other boards are making decisions for them or in the case of the West ADA School District, they were simply told, you know, we're going to do a teacher sick out by the West ADA Education Association and now they're forced to continue negotiating with them because that's what the state law requires them. The school boards actually have the kinds of control they need over the operations of their own school district.

Senator Stephen Thayne: So I remember the second thing.

Wayne Hoffman: Oh, go back to the second thing and we'll come back to mine.

Senator Stephen Thayne: The second thing was, we've been able to make this shift in the conversation because we've been focusing on what we're trying to do to improve things. That's really critical. If you focus on complaining, then one, it doesn't feel very good but also it doesn't give a vision of where we're headed. When you focus on what can we do to make things better, then it gives us some power to argue from, well, let's do this, then we start setting the agenda. So when it comes to school boards, you know, your question of West ADA and different things, what is it the local school boards are trying to accomplish? And I don't expect you to answer that, but that's one of the questions they need to ask of themselves 'cause many times they're trying to please the teachers, which is an important segment to please, don't get me wrong. Teachers are important. They have a central role. When I talk about parents, I'm not discounting the importance of teachers.

But in order to really improve the system, there's an interplay between parents, students, teachers, administrators, the taxpayers. And so I think in the past, school boards to focus more on the voice of teachers, rather than bringing all these voices in and saying what is it that everyone wants and making accommodations. Socialism doesn't work or one, because it's one size fits all. I've never understood during this pandemic why we've said everyone should be in school or everyone should be out of school. Let the ones that don't want to be in school stay home and do blended learning or online learning, those that want to come to school, let them come to school. Why are we having this debate? I've never understood why we're even having the debate of if schools are open or not. If you don't want to come, no one's got a gun to your head asking you to come. But yet there are people who believe in collective salvation, you know, earthly salvation that says we all have to do the same thing. It's a faulted, it's a false doctrine. We don't have to do all the same thing.

The history of the United States should point out that we have made progress because we've allowed people to do different things. When it comes to religion, you have Mormons, you have Catholics, you have Seventh Day Adventists, they're all doing fine. They're doing different things. You got Muslims, you got all sorts of folks. Well, since when did we have to do the same thing when it comes to education or public policy? We need to accommodate diversity. Conservatives are the ones that are really diverse, 'cause I don't want to control you Wayne. I want to have a structure where you can make your decisions, which is what we call government and I want a structure where my rights are protected and I can make my own decisions. And so the real question is who's responsible to take care of the poor? Who's responsible to take care of education 'cause that's what we're talking about, is education? You know, that's really the question. If it's the parent's responsibility, then public education system and decisions completely change.

Wayne Hoffman: I would say it is the parents' responsibility, but the parents have been led to believe that it's somebody else's responsibility. I mean, I keep going back to all, both my kids are grown now. They both went to public schools, but even I think failed because I allowed for the public school system to control their education. You know, it was very easy for a person to put a kid on a bus with \$2 and 50 cents in their pocket and have the decisions about what they're learning and what they eat by the \$2 50 cents being used for the lunch program is what I mean by that. Somebody else is figuring that up because it's very easy. If you had a program that also clawed the kids, or you sent, put the kids on the bus naked and they show up there and somebody throws, slaps a t-shirt and a pair of jeans on them, that's great because you know that at least they have clothes on their backs, right. But when you are exonerated from having to make those decisions, of course, somebody else takes up that slack. That is the nature of government, right?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Right. So it's really fascinating. I remembered the fourth bill or the fifth bill now.

Wayne Hoffman: Oh, we're back to that. Okay. Go ahead.

Senator Stephen Thayne: It's an advanced opportunities style program for private school students.

Wayne Hoffman: Okay.

Senator Stephen Thayne: So it's a mini grant for private school students for dual credit and AP tests is what that is. So what's interesting is why you were seduced to give up your responsibility to see your kids were educated is because if you wanted to stay in the public education system, what would you have done different? You could have taught them more at home, but the kids were tired 'cause they're in school for seven or eight hours. So they didn't want to talk to you when they got home. I know I had kids too.

Wayne Hoffman: More of them than I did.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yeah. I talked, but I didn't know they were listening, but they actually listen more than I thought. But you didn't get involved because could you change the curriculum? Could you change the school schedule? Could you change your teacher? There's nothing you could do. So it's choice that allows parents to get engaged. That's what the power of choice is. Let me give you a statistic here. You've got seven factors of public education that are important. Five of them costs money, two of them don't. The two that don't are desire of a student to learn and the engagement level of the parents. Parents get engaged because they have choices or they feel responsibility as they just naturally, they haven't let go of it completely 'cause you didn't let go of all your responsibility. You saw that they-

Wayne Hoffman: No, but again, it is a function of what government does to people. It allows for them to get off the hook and not take responsibility. But when I have a child, you know, I'm responsible for feeding them, clothing them, and educating them, unless I give that responsibility to somebody else. And it's easy to do that because here's a program, we'll take care of you. Put them on a school bus, somebody will handle the issue. And that in and of itself reduces the power and influence of the person, of the parents in favor of something else, in this case, the government program. Now it could be a private school for that matter too but in this particular case, for most of the people educated in Idaho and in the United States, it's a government program.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Now, most good parents send their kids to school, but they don't give up the responsibility, if it'd be private or public. They still monitor to make sure education is taking place. So I don't mean to give the indication that if you send your kids to public school, you're never responsible parents. I don't mean to say that at all.

Wayne Hoffman: But it allows for you to divest some of the responsibility, not necessarily all of it, but some of that responsibility and that's an important thing. I want to get back to this thing though, before I forget, because it's really important 'cause there was a big conversation about the power of that, 'cause one of the things that I thought that I had control over was if I had a complaint about the way the school was operating, I go to school board. Do school boards have the power they need to run their schools under Idaho law?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, you probably have to break it down into different categories. Like curriculum, they can choose the curriculum. Can they discipline? Do they have tools to discipline teachers and students? Yes. Fairly regulated on how they spend the money. So specifically, what are you asking?

Wayne Hoffman: Do they have the ability to say, no, we don't want to negotiate with a union that is either way left of center or behaves in a way that is egregious towards the parents and the kids who go to school here; the case that's most obvious being the West ADA School District. The West ADA Education Association, did a sick out, really ruined the work plans of the parents and also the education plans of the parents and the students. And yet the school board is still going to have to sit across from them at the negotiating table, because that's what Idaho law requires them to do. Why can't the school board be able to say, nope, you behaved in a bad way, we don't want to negotiate with you?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Current law says they have to negotiate. If they're represented by 51% or so of the teachers. Yeah, what it says. Now, it also is fairly lenient in saying that after a certain date, they don't have to continue to negotiate. They can give the teachers union their last best offer. So it's pretty open for school districts. But most school districts realize it's a working relationship and so we want to make sure we don't tip the scales too much. So there's incentive for both sides to work together. And I think the system right now is pretty balanced. Let me go back to one other thing.

Wayne Hoffman: Yeah, I'm at a loss as to why this is so controversial. When I asked Representative Claus, your counterpart over in the house, same question, he had the same kind of very nervous chuckle also. I don't understand that. There are plenty of states that have no public collective bargaining whatsoever. Idaho, 85% Republican in both bodies does and yet school boards don't have the ability to say, we don't want to negotiate. So the word in the statute is the school board shall negotiate with the union. Not may negotiate, shall negotiate. And-

Senator Stephen Thayne: And then what does the statute go on to say?

Wayne Hoffman: It goes on to say a lot of things, but I mean, tell me something specifically.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, specifically it doesn't say they have to agree that the last best offer of the school district can stand.

Wayne Hoffman: There's a last best offer but the question is, should we have a little bit more latitude for the elected school board to be able to make a decision about whether they want to negotiate or not? And that might also put in place an incentive for a union to not behave badly as they did in Meridian.

Senator Stephen Thayne: So, I gave you the answer, you didn't like it, and that is so if you don't like the answer, that's fine.

Wayne Hoffman: It was fine. I was just trying to understand why it's so controversial. I mean, the police departments don't have required collective bargaining with the cities in which they engage. They either want to negotiate or they don't have to negotiate. That's up to the cities. We give them that at the city level, but for some reason, school boards aren't allowed to make the same decision. Okay. You disagree? That's fine. Just wondering why that is. And then the second question that's part of that of course, is shouldn't we be looking at the fact that these unions are heavily tied to very leftist leading organizations at a national level that are pro abortion, that are anti-gun and anti-capitalism. And yet, by having that mandatory negotiation, they end up actually siphoning money from Idaho to the national level to fund their dangerous ideology.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, those are fairly deep issues, important issues, but I don't think people should make the mistake that all teachers have leftist ideologies.

Wayne Hoffman: Oh, no. I didn't say that. I'm talking about the National Education Association, which has gone on record as supporting abortion, as opposing gun rights, as opposing capitalism, these values that we hold in high regard, and yet we help fund them at a local level through our local labor unions, not the teachers, because the teachers I don't know, necessarily agree with those, but they feel they have to be represented by some organization, so they are.

Senator Stephen Thayne: So I was just talking with a legislator who has a wife that's a teacher, or going to become a teacher and she didn't want to join the IAA because of that association. There is something out there called the Northwest Professional Educators Association. And so I looked that up for, and they're located in Meridian. So my legislative career I've had a couple of maxims. One is to focus on what's good for kids. And basically because teacher's union, Idaho was fairly, they don't have much influence at the state legislature. They might out in the districts. I don't know, but I don't pay much attention to them. So I don't go out of my way to change what's going on with them. You know, during the time Tom Luna was in the superintendency, we made some major shifts in the relationship between the teachers' union and administration or the school boards. One time they had this evergreen clause, we got rid of that. So we've made some ... If that balance needs to be changed again or reconsidered, I'm all for talking about it, but you just asked me-

Wayne Hoffman: You don't think they need to be changed. I mean, for some reason, you-

Senator Stephen Thayne: I haven't heard any concerns about it.

Wayne Hoffman: You don't pay any attention to them and yet they have the tremendous amount of power. There is no statute that requires a school board to negotiate with the taxpayers, for example. There is no statute that says the school boards required them to go shit with, I don't know, the local businesses in town, but they have to negotiate what the labor union.

Senator Stephen Thayne: So is there something else you want to talk about 'cause we disagree on this one?

Wayne Hoffman: No, that's fine. Okay, we can ... I'm just kind of, I'm fascinated, endlessly fascinated why a Republican legislature in a Republican controlled state is so afraid of rebalancing the tables when it comes to the labor unions. But we can move on to other things.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yeah, we can move on.

Wayne Hoffman: We tackled the common core last legislative session a little bit. I think-

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, let me address one thing if I could.

Wayne Hoffman: Sure. You got it.

Senator Stephen Thayne: So some people don't recognize a couple of relationships here. We have some really good family structure in Idaho, and we're benefiting from that as taxpayers because we spend \$3500 dollars, less per student on our students in Idaho than the national average. If we did what other states tried to do, which has increase teachers' salaries in order to improve educational outcomes, it would cost \$1.2 billion, more. \$1.2 billion more. So what we're doing, you know, some people have heard that we're 50th in the nation, we're actually 51st 'cause you include the District of Columbia. And I proud of that as far as spending goes, but we're 16th in the nation. We were as high as fifth in the nation in preparing kids for college on the NAPE scores, which is National Association of Educational Progress, National Assessment of Educational Progress. They do fourth and eighth grade reading and math.

We score either in the top 10 or in the teens. So Idaho and Indiana are two states that spend way lower than the national average yet are getting high rates of return. Indiana, I think I'm not exactly sure why. I mean, I haven't looked into that much, but they have very strong school choice movement in Indiana. In Idaho, we have advanced opportunities and a strong family structure. We've got to recognize why we're spending so little money instead, and yet getting a good return on investment. This is an important thing to talk about education because when I talk about increasing parental involvement, we're talking about improving outcomes without any extra money. And that's really what I think one of the things you'd be interested in, even though we can disagree on other things.

Wayne Hoffman: Well, I mean, there's plenty to agree and disagree on, but you know, I've always been aiming for that a 51st in the nation. Let's be, you know, 57th in the nation or will just add in all the territories and so on and to the-

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, we probably are, got them all in.

Wayne Hoffman: You know, look, the amount of money you spend is never an indicator of success. If that were the case, what is it, Washington DC would have the best schools in the nation and they don't, or is it New York State? I can't which one-

Senator Stephen Thayne: I think it's New York. They spend 22,000 per kid. We spend about 7,000.

Wayne Hoffman: Yeah, and I'd love to spend half of that.

Senator Stephen Thayne: And in fact, in New York City, they have 45% of their, no it's Massachusetts that have 45% of their population, adult population that has a baccalaureate degree or higher. Idaho only has 27%, which indicates a cultural view of the importance of education. Indiana has 27% also, and they're in the top 10 in these categories. So money isn't everything, no.

Wayne Hoffman: Money is not everything. Common core. We started talking about last year. I think there was an agreement among the house and Senate education committees that we need to do something differently. There is an interim committee that have been working on it over the course of the summer. Where are we on that?

Senator Stephen Thayne: That's a great question. I think-

Wayne Hoffman: That's why I asked it.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yeah, I think the math subcommittee did a wonderful job. We gave all these subcommittees 'cause the legislative interim committee did not write the standards or rewrite them. We turned them over to sub committees that were organized by the State Department of Education. Now I was on one of them. So members of the committee could be on the subcommittees, but the subcommittee over math, which Representative Kirby was on, I think did a marvelous job 'cause they started with Massachusetts standards. They abandoned Idaho standards completely in math, though there are similarities. You know, standards, you're going to add subtraction decimals. There's going to be similarities in all standards, but they put in there at what age or what grade levels students should be fluent in their math facts, you know, like addition, subtraction, and as you get into third and fourth grade multiplication, division, 'cause that had been lacking from the previous standards.

So there's real emphasis on that. They have more examples. So long story short, I think the public is going to be happy with the math standards. The English language standards, ELA standards, I don't think we can give quite as rosy report. We did find out a couple of things. We made lots of changes. So at one time people said you couldn't change the common core standards. Well, ELA subcommittee started with the common core standards then we started changing them. So you can change them. In Idaho teachers and parents, mostly teachers went through all the standards, made quite a few edits. In the ninth through 12th grade, we reduced quite a few standards, mostly because of Representative Marshall.

The big problem with the standards though was they're agnostic. Meaning you should be able to do this, but with ELA, they need to be associated with some sort of content. So this standard could apply to the Bible or the communist manifesto of the constitution, or, you know, it could apply to anything. So one of the things I'm suggesting is that we put a preface in front of the ELA standards saying you should have something like the core knowledge sequence as a content guide. Now the core knowledge sequence has nothing to do with common core. It was established previous to common core, but it's a 285 page document that just it's like a syllabus for everything from ELA to math history, geography, music between kindergarten and the eighth grade. And then it includes ... The reason I think school districts need to choose some curriculum that ties into this is because has that commons the core knowledge foundation sequence talks a lot about historical literature, historical American events.

You know, one thing Florida did is they embedded a lot of civics, you know, American history. And so that's what I'm suggesting school districts needed to go after. Now, Florida, they can choose at the state level, the curriculum, but in Idaho local school districts need to do that. The problem with the big network, big, you know, national textbook publishers is they say they're common core aligned, but it's

full of a lot of empty curriculum. It's not uplifting. It doesn't reinforce traditional American values. It doesn't talk about American history. And so we need ... But the standards could go to any of these. You could have good curriculum or bad curriculum. So I'm suggesting we need to say the content that we recommend, then go find a curriculum to meet it, that fits this criteria is X, Y, and Z more of a classical traditional curriculum or content.

Wayne Hoffman: What do you hope that that will accomplish?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, you were talking about the role of school boards, right? Well, especially with the innovative classroom, it will allow parents to go to the school boards and say, listen, we don't have to buy these national textbooks. We can write our own. If we can't find what we want. Utah's done that. It's in the state constitution. There's a center up in the University of Idaho that can help school districts write their own textbooks. So we can start changing the culture from the socialist culture to what the constitution says we should be doing in that as teaching education, that reinforces a Republican form of government.

Wayne Hoffman: And you think that's going to happen and how long would it take for that to occur?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, one day less than when we start.

Wayne Hoffman: I mean a year, two years, six months?

Senator Stephen Thayne: For what to accomplish? To change the culture or to change the-

Wayne Hoffman: For you to get to a place where your standards are written in such a way that allows for this diversion into a more civics based education that reinforces American principles, I guess, is the way I'd frame that. It sounds wonderful, but I'm just wondering about the time-

Senator Stephen Thayne: Two or three years before, you know, before teachers kind of re-tool and especially if we make that, this is what the legislature, this is what the constitution says we're supposed to be doing. Then the state board of education will go out because the standards aren't going to be adopted until next year, but they can go out in their spring tour when they visit with all the school districts and say, this is one of the things that the legislature said we should do, here's the content standards, here's the preface in front of the, of the ELA standards. So we can start seeing some significant changes within two or three years.

Wayne Hoffman: Is that fast enough? I mean, so if I'm the parent of a ninth grader, what you're saying is that my ninth grader won't have any access to that so they won't benefit from that. They'll be out in either college or the workforce by the time that comes to fruition. It seems to just move glacially and aren't we-

Senator Stephen Thayne: That's actually really fast, but-

Wayne Hoffman: But I mean, for the purposes of where we are, because I look at, and maybe you have a different view and I'd be interested in-

Senator Stephen Thayne: So Wayne, I got to ask you a question. Are you looking for possibilities or stumps?

Wayne Hoffman: Well, I'm looking for possibilities, but I think the possibilities have to come sooner rather than on the timetable that you're talking about. I look at these young people that are, you know, attending the Black Lives Matters protests, and they all seem to be between the ages of 17 and 25 and I kind of wonder if we taught them to be that way. Do you?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, definitely, people make decisions based upon what they've heard.

Wayne Hoffman: But you think that the next two or three years to get that done is just the best we can do or that's just the way it is because it's government I made. I'm-

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yeah, that's the best you can do.

Wayne Hoffman: That's the best you can.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Now, we're talking about changing the system. It's the parent's responsibility. They need to wake up and what we could do to make more rapid changes is I could give you this core knowledge sequence that has more American, like as Johnny Appleseed and Abraham Lincoln and George Washington cut down the apple tree and sayings that like, you know, two wrongs don't make a right, all sorts of great things. In fact, I show it to legislators and they say, this is what I thought education should be, but I could give you that link and parents can go find it right now and they can, you know, during the summer they can review their student's curriculum 'cause no, we can't wait for the school system to change. Parents need to act.

Wayne Hoffman: So you're doing the part that you think you can do with the system, because that's the area, the field that you operate in. What parents are able to do is an entirely different thing. That information is available to them. It's out there.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yeah.

Wayne Hoffman: Let's talk because we're running out of time, I think, I'm guessing.

Senator Stephen Thayne: I would think we are.

Wayne Hoffman: Let's-

Senator Stephen Thayne: We're putting Dustin to sleep.

Wayne Hoffman: We were putting him to sleep, which isn't good. Let's run over to higher education because I don't want to leave that on the table because you did have an interesting conversation at the Senate Education Committee and House Education Committee. I have actually heard, what I would say is the most fascinating discussion in either of the committees in a long time where the members are actually asking questions about what it is the students in the higher education system are given in terms of the social justice indoctrination. Is that something you're concerned about? Is that something you think your committee is concerned about for this legislative session?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yes and yes.

Wayne Hoffman: How much and what are you going to do about it?

Senator Stephen Thayne: You know, that's a great question because higher ed, you know, I haven't spent a lot of time trying to get involved in higher ed space, but what I have been doing, I can tell you about what I'm going to do in the future. You know, I'm still trying to figure out what that should be, but your report, you know, the Idaho Freedom Foundation report on social justice at BSU was a great report. You had some good suggestions there. Not all of them I agree with, but I think you had some really good ones. One thing I suggested to president Trump, to create a program entitled the Failure of Socialism throughout History that high school kids could take as dual credit. And I've also mentioned that to the president of CSI. I'd love to see that course 'cause if students start seeing what has happened through history and how failure socialism has been, it neutralizes a lot of this social justice nonsense 'cause social justice basically sets up dissension and it's just not the right way to go.

The other thing I did, I sent all the presidents a letter asking them, telling them which definition of social justice do you go with. And I gave them the UN definition, which is more like in your report and then mine, which is help individual become responsible, enabled to be self-funded individuals, you know, respectful taxpayers. And then I said, what is your policy for students that experience instructor bias? We need to get that out right away. So students on campus that are experiencing bias and intimidation from other students, or the instructors know where to go to get redressed.

Wayne Hoffman: How are the university presidents responding to what you've had to say and what your inquiries have been?

Senator Stephen Thayne: The president of LCSC and the community college presidents, I think are great. The other three, you ought to find out if they got the email or not.

Wayne Hoffman: We'll see. What is the legislature prepared to do about this? Where is the legislature more inclined to take a back seat and just wag its finger, its collective finger from the sideline and say, do better next time and we'll see in a year?

Senator Stephen Thayne: I don't know. I know some JFAC members are very concerned, so there's some strings, financial strings that could be pulled. I think because a few of us have been bringing this issue up. There's some concern on the part of the presidents that they don't want this to get out of hand because we spend like \$300 million a year on universities and we don't want them subverting the Idaho way of life.

Wayne Hoffman: Could you say to the university presidents, we want you to exercise the money that's being spent on social justice programs on your office of gender equity and your LGBTQ offices and various other very center left, very victim hood driven types of organizations on campus from the system?

Senator Stephen Thayne: I think that's something that we actually could potentially do an intent language. But what you said earlier, I don't know if it's on tape or not about how the constitution at BSU has changed which is student body constitution, I think is very instructive.

Wayne Hoffman: That was not on tape. So I didn't want to get that on tape, but what happened at Boise State by way of background, because it wasn't on there. It's important is that Boise State has a student body and that student body has a constitution. The constitution was changed a few years ago, so that it has not just two branches of government, a general assembly and a higher body senate, but also it has a third branch of government called the Inclusive Excellence Student Council, which basically is allowed to

veto or override those policies passed by the legislature at the Boise State that doesn't conform with the social justice agenda.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yeah.

Wayne Hoffman: And money from students goes to that. It is funded by public dollars.

Senator Stephen Thayne: This is a work in progress. So I can say that I think the presidents of universities, especially the university of Idaho and ISU and LCSC are not beset by quite as much, but I love to see your reports. But I really can't answer the question in a way that would make people happy right now. It's a work in progress.

Wayne Hoffman: It's good that it's a work in progress. That's something. So are you committed to not leaving the 2021 legislative session? Hopefully that's not an ultimatum, but I wanted to ask, are you committed? Is it something important enough that you want to continue working until you find some way of roping this in or do you think that we're going to conclude the 2021 legislative session without progress being made on this front?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, right now, you know, it's very likely that the progress will be minimal 'cause the two things that I thought of or have been talked about, 'cause, you know, I hear things and they're not my ideas, is some intent language. The other is we could do some sort of resolution or even letter from the education committees saying we'd like to be issued to change their constitution back. Now we need to think about those, you know, the ramifications and you know, you got to shop things around because just because we have a good idea between us, there's things that we maybe haven't thought of.

Wayne Hoffman: But at least there's a discussion. I do not have a monopoly on good ideas. I have 90% of the good ideas.

Senator Stephen Thayne: I thought you did. We got that on tape though, right?

Wayne Hoffman: You have it on tape because I do not have a monopoly on the good ideas, but at least there's other conversations taking place about what could be done. I just like the fact that people are asking questions. I know in JFAC there were questions asked about the University of Idaho's Black Lives Matter's resource page. And I got to tell you that I think that President Green wasn't entirely candid about what happened with that. For example, that website had nothing but socialists and extremist viewpoints. And just prior to the start of the legislative session, they changed the website to include commentators like for example, Walter Williams and Thomas Sewell, but they went months with nothing but extreme leftist viewpoints on the funded and paid for by the taxpayers and the students at the University of Idaho.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yeah. There needs to be ... I don't mind having Black Lives Matter, people talk, but there has to be exposure to other people that are equally-

Wayne Hoffman: Absolutely.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Articulate and available.

Wayne Hoffman: I mean, you wouldn't expect for the Department of Health And Welfare to set up a Black Lives Matter webpage, but for some reason, it's okay at the University of Idaho. I guess this is a way to, for me to frame that.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, it's a little bit different in universities, but they should have a webpage that is similar with like say Walter Williams or Frederick Bastiat, you know, different people. I've even written some.

Wayne Hoffman: You have written some. That is a good point. You can offer up your-

Senator Stephen Thayne: Probably rejected but-

Wayne Hoffman: In a digital format 'cause of the little booklets are all very good but they're not, you know, necessarily transferable to web, but then they're there. But also the other question that I kind of wonder about with regards to the university system is they kind of in statute it says that the state board of education's responsible for setting tuition fees and they told legislators and they're not bashful about this because they said it during the JFAC hearings they said, the house has said it in the senate that if the legislature passes the governor's budget, then they will smile upon their students and not raise tuition and fees. I find that fascinating because the legislature could easily say, you know what, we're responsible for that. We don't want you raising tuition and fees either and so we're going to put that into the appropriation bill that whatever you charge last year also has to be charged this year. What's the appetite of the legislature to take that authority, that separate authority away from the university presidents and the State Board of Education?

Senator Stephen Thayne: I have no idea.

Wayne Hoffman: What's your appetite?

Senator Stephen Thayne: It's not great. There's some other things I need to investigate first?

Wayne Hoffman: I mean, do you think that they should just have that ability to just separate out the issues and say regardless because I, you know, whether the legislature raises general funds spending a lot or a little, the answer every year for almost every year for the last 40 years has been we're raising tuition. When does the legislature take ownership of that or never?

Senator Stephen Thayne: I don't know.

Wayne Hoffman: Something you're looking at?

Senator Stephen Thayne: I have not been looking at that.

Wayne Hoffman: How about this one? Should two students have the ability to decide where their fees goes? That's another conversation I hear some lawmakers talking about. So for example, if I don't want to fund the Gender Equity Center on campus, I should be able to opt out of that.

Senator Stephen Thayne: I think that could get legs in the legislature.

Wayne Hoffman: Why is that?

Senator Stephen Thayne: It's a choice issue that, you know, you're supporting something that you don't want to support. If you want to support it, go ahead and do it.

Wayne Hoffman: If it's so wonderful, then you should have the ability.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Yeah.

Wayne Hoffman: One more thing.

Senator Stephen Thayne: I better get going here pretty quick.

Wayne Hoffman: Can I ... One more to throw at you and then I'll get out of your hair?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Is the ambush part of this?

Wayne Hoffman: Oh, no, no, not at all. There's nothing ambushy than what you've already gotten. The Boise State University and Idaho State University are both home to national public radio on campus. Why do we have that and should it be allowed to continue?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well, what do you think Wayne?

Wayne Hoffman: I invited everyone knows where I fit in. What's yours?

Senator Stephen Thayne: Well-

Wayne Hoffman: Should national public radio, should, I guess should government be in the radio business is one, and number two, because the State Board of Education holds those licenses and two, I don't know if you've ... Have you listened to NPR lately?

Senator Stephen Thayne: I have not.

Wayne Hoffman: You should really take a listen to it. It's the alt weekly of the radio. And it's paid for by the citizens of the state of Idaho. There's about it was just, it's not a huge amount of money, several hundred thousand dollars from taxpayers go to support those programs.

Senator Stephen Thayne: I'll have to listen.

Wayne Hoffman: Yeah. Should the government be in the radio business? I mean, just intellectually, not even talking about specific to KBSU, KBS X and KISU.

Senator Stephen Thayne: There's just a lot of things that fundamentally I agree or disagree with that aren't what I promote or don't promote because people think they should be promoted. So I will listen and we'll see if there's a problem that we should address. I'm not ready to answer that question.

Wayne Hoffman: Fair enough. Final thoughts on education in the 2021 legislative session.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Oh, I think this is going to be a very interesting session that will hopefully be viewed in the future as really jump-starting the ability of parents to oversee and get involved in their kids' education, which will be a very positive thing. So I'm very positive about this session.

Wayne Hoffman: Well, I know you got a lot ahead of you. You got a big agenda and you're the bull's-eye that's for sure. More than I am, even, which is saying a lot, but I appreciate you taking time to come on the program and you're welcome back anytime.

Senator Stephen Thayne: Alright. Well, thank you.

Wayne Hoffman: Thank you. And we'll be back again for another edition of the Halftime Report. Stay tuned.