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Opinion: Idaho congressional delegation votes against interests of Idahoans

By BEVERLY BEACH | Guest columnist
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In the American Rescue Plan signed by President Biden last year, \$350 billion was set aside for state and local governments to use at their discretion. Idaho received \$1.89 billion.

Why is Idaho accepting federal funds? Idaho hates anything federal. Gov. Little stated “rejecting the funds is not the right thing to do. Rejecting the funds would mean California, New York, Illinois and other big states get to spend Idahoans’ tax dollars. Rejecting the funds would mean Idaho gives up our say in how our allocated share gets spent. That is unacceptable. Therefore, Idaho will accept the allocation for our state.”



Beverly Beach

I have to respectfully disagree with Gov. Little. Rejecting these funds does not mean California, New York, Illinois and other big states would be spending Idaho tax dollars.

On the contrary. Idaho is a taker state. In other words, Idaho receives more money from the federal government than Idaho pays in taxes. Under the American Rescue Plan Idaho is actually using tax dollars sent to the federal government by California, Nev

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and other large states. Idaho is the recipient of the giver states' money. Idaho's benefit is \$1.89 billion. Yes, I am glad Idaho received those funds, and hopefully, Idaho will spend those dollars wisely to benefit Idaho both now and in the future.

Food for thought: Our congressional delegation voted no on the American Rescue Plan. I am glad there were enough Democrats in Congress who felt that Idaho should receive their portion of this funding allocation. Not a single Republican voted for this bill, yet Idaho and every other red state will benefit.

Additionally, the state of Idaho will have a \$1.4 billion surplus this year. Instead of saving for a rainy day, our Legislature has chosen to give income tax breaks to Idahoans. While it is nice to have a tax break, in the next few years Idaho will certainly have a budget shortfall. The tax cut will provide the most benefit to wealthy Idahoans, but apparently "most families" will get some benefit.

As you will recall on Aug. 31, 2006, Gov. Risch signed the Property Tax Relief Act. The measure retroactively reduced property taxes to Jan. 1, 2006, offset by an increase in the state's sales tax of one cent on Oct. 1 that year. The average property owner received a \$40 to \$50 decrease in their property tax bill.

If the average Idahoan spent \$1,000 per month just for groceries and other essentials, his sales tax bill increased by \$120. The tax shift cost the average property owner \$60 while renters received no tax break and were required to pay additional sales tax on groceries and other essentials.

This kind of tax shift disproportionately affects the poor and those on Social Security. Idaho continually shifts the tax burden to lower and middle-class working families thus protecting big business and the wealthy.

Fast forward to August 2022. Our congressional delegation again voted no on a party-line vote on the Inflation Reduction Act. Most Idahoans will benefit from lower prescription costs, including a cap of \$35 a month on insulin which now costs famil

hundreds of dollars a month. In addition, those on Medicare will have no more than \$2,000 out-of-pocket expenses per year.

Our congressional delegation is wrong when stating taxes will go up on low and middle-income families. White House briefings have stated emphatically there will absolutely be no tax increase, not even one penny, on families making less than \$400,000.

The Inflation Reduction Act will benefit you and me. It will lower health care costs, and it will reduce the impact of special interest lobbying in the future. There are 1,600 pharmaceutical lobbyists working against the American people in Congress. That is three lobbyists for every member of Congress.

There are 126 leading economists that have stated the Inflation Reduction Act will reduce the deficit and will support strong, stable economic growth. In spite of our congressional delegation continually voting the party line, Idahoans can be grateful there are enough members of Congress who support and pass legislation that is in the best interest of the majority of people living in Idaho.

Beverly Beach lives near Arco. She has been active in the Grand Teton Council of the Boy Scouts from Pack to Council positions. She is a Democrat and former candidate from Bingham County for the state Legislature.