

Sept. 25, 2025

Dennis Sutton

To: SCC

BCC: Annette Harker; Dan Sutton; Jim Purvis

Subject: This Is Our Job One

Attachments: 250214CountyTotals; Alice 2023.jpg; foodinsecurityReg7.png

With us all gathering this weekend, I think we have all been overlooking our First Responsibility. It's the same requirement every business faces every day they are in operation — BASIC SURVIVAL!

Two years ago, we could claim almost 15% of the affiliated voters in this state. As you can see from the file attached, today, we have just 12.5% of the voting public affiliating publicly with our brand. In the past two years we've LOST almost 20% of those few who did affiliate with our party. We are now starting to compete with those "Hobby" parties like the Constitution and Libertarian parties. This is a "growth curve" we can't survive! Something we're doing isn't working — or else it's something we're not doing.

We aren't the only ones with this problem; it's a [national trend](#). And it has been happening for decades here in Idaho, so we can't blame the current leadership totally. This is a problem we "the Owners" of the Idaho Democratic Party need to take responsibility for.

Our leaders and staff are only our "hired help" (sometimes paid other times not) like in any other firm this "C-Suite" of officers simply executes and implements the missions and directives (US) owners give them. And we haven't been giving them enough support and guidance to instruct them to elevate this issue to JOB ONE status. Which we MUST do at our earliest opportunity, perhaps this weekend.

I have counties with several hundred affiliated Dems who can't get any participation in just attending a meeting, let alone standing publicly as one of our Democrat Precinct Captains or even an officer. And I have others reluctant to even hold meetings because of the hostile attention they gain in their tiny communities. We have let our reputation slide to the point that too many of our supporters are asking themselves, "How long do you feed a chicken that doesn't lay?" As we have failed to defend and provide for our constituents' needs, they have started to follow my grandmother's solution to that question: Sunday's chicken dinner. And they have either dropped out of registering at all and simply gone to ground, or some have become "Unaffiliated."

Take the Medicaid Expansion issue from a decade ago. When our legislators couldn't acquire enough votes for Idaho to adopt this solution to issues most Idahoans were experiencing, we just caved and told our supporters and the rest of the state that we gave up. That opened the door for splinter parties like Indivisible, Idaho Progressives, and others. Plus, it provided an avenue for an enterprising group called ReClaim Idaho to form. They shouted that they weren't affiliated with the Idaho Democrats as one of their validations; even though most all of their door-knockers and other volunteers we Democrat Party members. They got the credit for getting it on the ballot and

getting it passed; we got the credit for our impotency. We have got to stop following the notion of: "Nothing Ventured — Nothing Lost!" Bean-counter logic like that is what got us here. We've got to get the reputation of being the ones who can and will defend those issues important to rural Idaho — we just can't continue to live on a few Leg Districts in Boise, Pocatello

I was reminded a while ago that as recently as the 1970's Madison County (one of our reddest counties today) was able to regularly seat 200-250 folks at their Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinners. Today, though we are rebuilding in that county, there is no dinner celebration.

We MUST re-sell the folks of Idaho on the values that makes us Democrats and that these values, unlike the opposition's actions, comport more with what they teach their children in school and Sunday School. It's the same values that built the farms and communities in this state for the past 150 years or so. They are the values that build community among neighbors. I think that, for me, they can best be summed up in the words from the Declaration of Independence: All People Are Created Equal. The opposition can't say that with a straight face. If you believe that, the only form of government you can build is a Democracy; if you don't believe that you can never build a functioning Democracy. We have to re-sell ourselves and others on re-building the Middle-Class not the Master-Class.

We must start an active campaign to recruit more Idahoans to support our team. I think we should be conducting a marketing campaign using social media and paid media to remind folks of the values we hold dear, and why they should want to help promote that kind of community where ever they live. We are involved in a Class War, not an ideological conflict. Here in Idaho roughly 40% of our state is living paycheck to paycheck (See the ALICE report charts for East Idaho) Homelessness, Food Banks, and Soup Kitchens were supposed to be something of the Depression Era, but that is the world our kids and grandkids are growing up in today. If we get our butts in gears and take lessons from the corporations who defend their brand repudiations more aggressively than almost anything else, And start to define ourselves publicly (instead of letting the opposition it for us). Plus adopt an aggressive PR campaign on TV, Radio, and Social Media telling folks that at least we HEAR their issues and are willing to help. I believe that we can re-attract folks to our brand and Party. At least we can elevate the reputations of those supporters who do still survive, to the level of at least a worthy and admirable opponent.

I have resume' in the advertising/promotion field, I volunteer to be a member of a steering committee to help our communications staff implement a comprehensive campaign of this sort as soon as possible. I know of many others who would also be well qualified to join in this venture. But it needs to be heavily weighted to the rural counties because they are the ones that don't speak Boisean. We need to be talking to folks about THEIR issues, in their language, not our projections.

We need to be the ones defining our party not the opposition! THIS IS OUR JOB ONE!

As Jim Purvis wrote: "Policy is about how to fix things. Issues are about what needs fixing. Our core beliefs are something else entirely. ...Our "product" is our beliefs , what we stand for, our basic identity. Failing to understand that ...failing to define it ...is why so much of our message

doesn't work.”

Looking forward to seeing you all in Pocatello!

I am,  
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My Campaign Toolbox  
[suttongrp.biz/campaign](http://suttongrp.biz/campaign)  
My "Future" Notebook  
[suttongrp.biz/future](http://suttongrp.biz/future)

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At the Fall 2025 SCC Meeting in Pocatello, September 27, 2025, a few days after posting the email above; Dakota Sharette, IDP's Executive Director responded saying, *Some people are suggesting that we need to conduct a messaging campaign to tell people who we are. That's what candidates are for.*