

Taskforce has draft recommendations on workforce development

If it doesn't invest in better workforce development, Idaho might not see its economic growth continue, the governor warned at a Chamber event June 7.

Idaho's labor force has increased from 760,000 workers in 2009 to 825,000 workers now. Unemployment hit 9.2 percent that year, and it's down to 3.5 percent today.

But there are so few skilled workers looking for jobs that out-of-state companies seeking a place to relocate might overlook Idaho in favor of states with better workers, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter said at his annual business address to the Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce.

Idaho has about 30,000 unemployed workers and about 20,000 unfilled jobs including 4,400 that the Idaho Department of Labor classifies as high-salaried and hard to fill.

But the skills available candidates have don't match the needs of the open positions, Otter said.

"My highest priority is and will continue to be building a more educated and skilled workforce," he said.

Idaho's workforce shortage is expected to grow more critical in the future as jobs in industries traditionally reliant on an unskilled workforce become more specialized and technical, said Ken Edmunds, director of the Idaho Department of Labor.

The state is expected to have 49,000 unfilled positions by 2024, according to the Idaho Department of Labor.

Otter assigned a task force of business leaders and government officials to study Idaho's workforce problems February 1. It will write a list of recommendations for the governor and Idaho Legislature to act upon next year.

The task force has drafted recommendations and will have one more meeting June 26 to vote on them before delivering a final report. The group's 10 recommendations are aimed at raising the number of high school graduates who go on to post-secondary education and expanding programs that help adults learn new skills.

If the recommendations are approved, Idaho will provide more support to the industry-led Workforce Development Council, which advises the governor, legislators and the State Board of Education.

Task force recommendations

The task force's draft recommendations include:

- Increasing the role of the Workforce Development Council and supplying it with a steady funding source.
- Providing career technical education programs with the same level of state support that traditional post-secondary programs receive.

IMPulse

Intermountain Media Pulse

A TRUETONE INCORPORATED COMPANY

**news
CLIP**

11623 Lake Shore
Nampa, ID 83686
(208) 880-9814

FOR YOUR INFORMATION
Idaho Business Review
Boise, Idaho
Friday June 9, 2017
by Benton Alexander Smith
Page 2 of 2

- Creating stronger requirements for career counseling in high schools and middle schools.
- Expanding career technical education programs into middle schools to give students the chance to learn about a wider variety of trades or learn more deeply about a single trade before graduating from high school.
- Encouraging school districts to integrate workforce readiness credentials (credentials that tell employers about specific skills and abilities) into the high school curriculum.
- Using state funds to expand apprenticeship programs and create new apprenticeships.
- Increasing the amount of state support for Idaho's six workforce training centers, which help train adults for on-demand occupations.

###

Copyright 2017 Idaho Business Review