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## The Solution to Poverty

I have lived in Idaho my entire life, and I love this state because of its uniqueness. Idaho combines many of the modern aspects of the United States with the traditions and old-fashioned views of old America. However, as interesting as this union is, it is not without its disadvantages.

This wonderful state unfortunately bears the ill-famed title as the state with the highest poverty level of persons between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. This is a serious problem that requires a remedy before it becomes malignant and threatens the basic economic structure of our state. First, the underlying causes must be identified in order to procure the solution or solutions.

Idaho is renowned for its agricultural backbone, which accounts for a high percentage of farms and young people living on farms. The young people who either work or live on farms are likely to live under the poverty level due to the fact that much of what they need is provided for them in the form of organic goods rather than currency. In this particular case, the amount of money earned, whether it is above or below the poverty level is not as great an issue as it would be otherwise, but it does add to the great percentage being addressed in this paper.

The old-fashioned mentality appearing from Idaho's agricultural base is very apparent in the morals and values of the state. Many young people choose to marry and start families in their late teens and early twenties. Often-times, one parent chooses to stay home with the children while the other parent works. The poverty level rises with each additional family member, but the number of

wage-earners remains the same. This results in a catch-22, and also contributes to the percentage of young people living under the poverty level.

Finally, Idaho's natural economic tendencies are to blame for this high percentage. Because we are caught in the middle of transition to a more modern society, yet we still cling to the traditional pre-modern mode of functioning, we lack the major benefits from being either completely one or the other. We cannot live directly off the land or depend on our own businesses entirely, yet we do not possess the large corporations that provide skilled, high paying jobs. We are stuck, because we cannot attract the large businesses without already owning other large establishments. Without the great enterprises that offer high-salary positions, Idaho's young population cannot hope to be paid much more than minimum wage. This is another unsolvable enigma.

The issue of finding a solution to this puzzle is incredibly complex. Our government spends a great deal of time attempting to find a way to solve this problem. However, almost every way to solve this dilemma creates more setbacks by either taking away money from other issues or going further into debt.

One way to decrease the percentage of young Idahoans living under the poverty level is to raise the minimum wage. A majority of those ages eighteen to twenty-four work at low-paying jobs. However, I do not know where this money would come from. Perhaps decreasing the tuition in Idaho state schools is the solution. Less tuition means more discretionary income for students and a higher percentage of young people who can afford to attend college. This, of course, leads to those students earning higher wages in their futures. A greater number of educated members in our society could also attract bigger companies, which would in turn produce a greater number of high-paying jobs and boost our economy both with the services the companies would provide and with

the greater cash-flow of those employees. This seems like a win-win solution, but the money that would act as the catalyst is still unavailable.

At this time, the best I can do to alleviate the problem of poverty is to make sure I do what I can to not be one of that percentage. My plan to prevent myself from being under the poverty line in my future is to gain my education now. A thorough education is the best ammunition to fight poverty. With an education, I can become a productive member and leader in society with a steady income to live comfortably and above the poverty level. However, this aim is long term and not immediate. To acquire my education, it may be necessary for me to voluntarily give up a full-time job and pay to go to school. With more money going out than income coming in, this option almost requires me to live beneath the poverty level. Many of Idaho's teens choose this path, which includes temporary poverty, but I consider this sacrifice now to be essential to secure our futures.

I believe Idaho is doing the best that it can with the resources available to it to assist those who are living under the poverty level. Those who are in need can gain help through programs such as housing assistance, food stamps, soup kitchens, W.I.C., salvation army, disability plans, and many other programs provided by the government and charitable organizations. Instead of creating more programs to aid those already in poverty I believe that *preventing* poverty is the best way to eradicate it. It is easier to correct a problem before it occurs. Once again, the best way to fight indigence is with education. When the people of a society are educated, they can make wiser financial decisions and contribute more to the civilization around them.

To gain this education at a young age when the transition into adulthood is fast approaching, Idaho teens should be required to take a course in financial planning and life choices as an addition to an economics credit. With the facts clearly presented to each student, more teenagers will be better prepared to face the challenges of the real world by making educated decisions. Information such as honest statistics, the benefits of completing the FAFSA, the wisest choices during a college

search, and how beginning a family at a young age increases the chance of living in poverty should be realistically presented to teens in an unbiased environment.

Idaho State University recently published its findings that a college graduate with a bachelor's degree will make an average of twenty-one thousand dollars a year more than a high school graduate only. This will add up to greater than eight hundred thousand dollars more over a lifetime. With facts such as these, young people of Idaho will have the knowledge to stay out of poverty and make the path in life that they feel is best for them.

In addition to this required credit, optional classes that would delve deeper into college and career planning should be available to high school students. These elective classes would be devoted to accomplishing real-life business skills and completing the college process for those students who would not have this type of assistance otherwise. Areas of learning would include filling out college and work applications, composing effective essays, completing scholarship requirements, communicating successfully with college admissions offices, studying for standardized tests, instructions for creating a resume, and mock college and job interviews.

Poverty in Idaho is treatable by prevention through better education programs and assistance for post-secondary education. The placement of this informative curriculum in our secondary schools is the first and fundamental step towards decreasing the poverty percentage for Idaho's younger population by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in the business aspects of life and become more marketable no matter what career choices they make. Idaho is a great state, and it is time to show America that our young population has much to offer and much to be proud of.