

# AAUP

American Association of University Professors

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*Academic Freedom for a Free Society*

February 22, 2011

VIA SURFACE AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. Arthur C. Vilas  
President  
Idaho State University  
921 South Eighth Avenue, Stop 8310  
Pocatello, Idaho 83209-8310

Dear President Vilas:

We have learned with dismay of the action taken on February 17 by the Board of Education of the State of Idaho, upon your recommendation, to suspend the faculty senate at Idaho State University and to substitute an interim governance structure. We understand that a week earlier the ISU faculty, in a referendum organized by the senate, had voted no confidence in your leadership. According to a university press release, board president Richard Westerberg characterized the board's unilateral suspension of the senate as "the most reasonable action to take at this time" because of the "impasse between the [senate] leadership and the administration."

Please be advised that this action contravenes widely observed principles of shared governance, as set forth in the enclosed 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, which was formulated jointly by the AAUP, the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. The *Statement on Government*, as you know, calls for "joint planning and effort" among board, administration, and faculty, but delegates primary responsibility for academic and faculty personnel matters to the faculty. In order for the faculty to participate appropriately in shared academic governance, "[a]gencies for faculty participation . . . should be established at each level where faculty responsibility is present" and "[a]n agency should exist for the presentation of the views of the whole faculty." Most relevant to the extant case are the following standards: "The structures and procedures for faculty participation should be designed, approved, and established by joint action of the components of the institution. Faculty representatives should be selected by the faculty according to procedures determined by the faculty."

Given the seriousness of this departure from generally accepted standards of academic governance, our General Secretary intends to authorize a formal investigation and resulting

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report on the matter unless you can apprise us of truly extraordinary factors currently unknown to us that would justify the action taken.

We would welcome a response from you by March 1.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gregory F. Scholtz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gregory F. Scholtz  
Associate Secretary and Director  
Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance

Enclosure (sent by electronic mail)

cc: Mr. Richard Westerberg, President, Idaho Board of Education  
Dr. Gary A. Olson, Provost, Idaho State University  
Professor Philip Cole, Chair, ISU Faculty Senate