



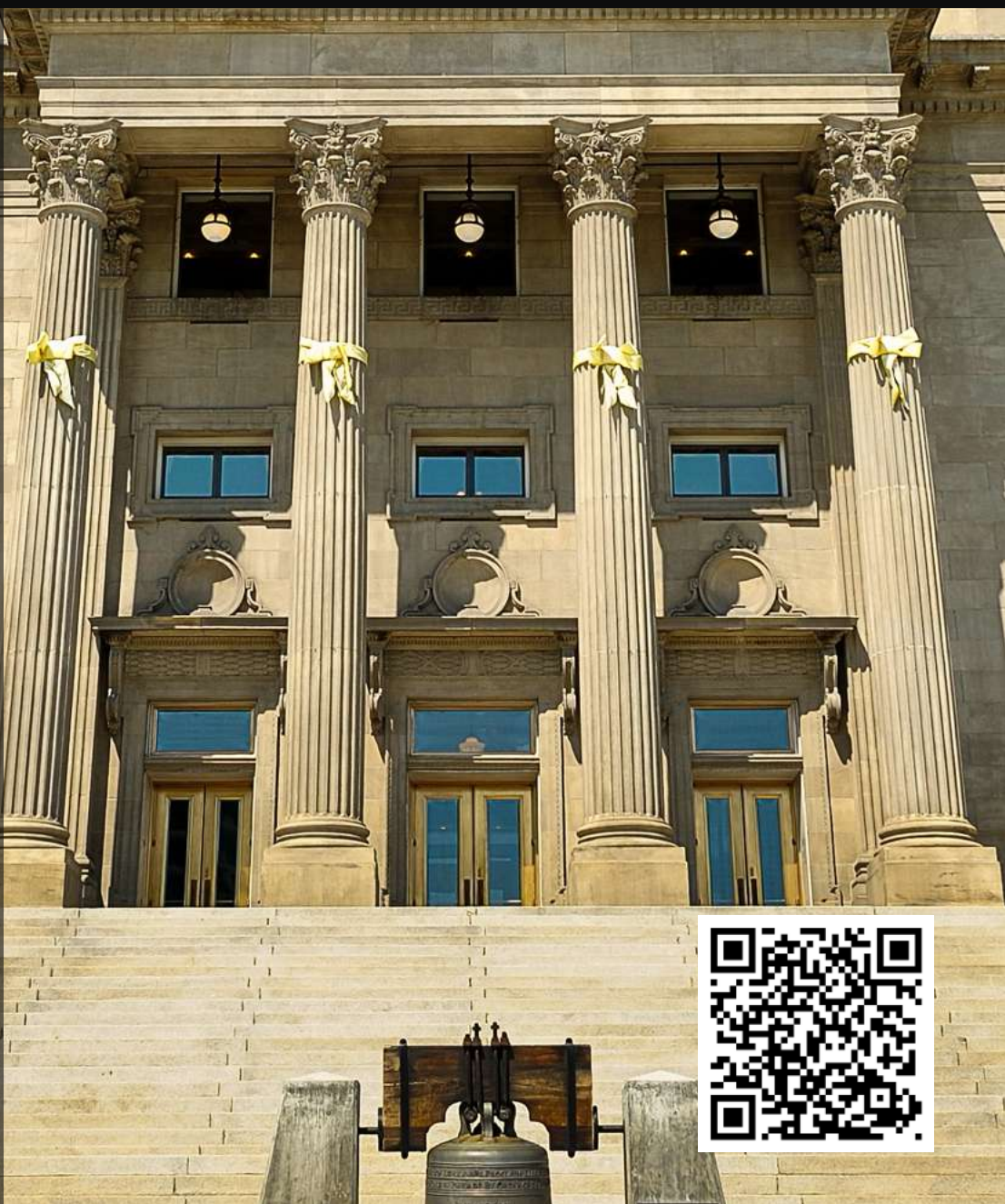
Idaho would benefit from a state department of government efficiency

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Introduction

Adopting a Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) was and is a hot topic as President Trump entered the Presidency in January of 2025. Elon Musk, our 'Dogefather,' took on the unappreciative analysis of uncovering waste of taxpayer dollars in our beast of the federal government, but what about each state? Undoubtedly, every state in the Union should also uncover wasted taxpayer dollars. This paper will provide an overview of DOGE and Idaho's financial landscape, focusing on its budget trends and income sources, by analyzing financial data from the past five years. The scope encompasses budget growth over recent years and the broader economic context impacting DOGE Idaho's financial planning and sustainability. Since 2020, Idaho has seen notable increases in its budget, driven by the rising spending in education, Medicaid, and roads. These three categories account for over 55% of the budget.¹

The goal of this paper is to remind ourselves of the purpose of government, create a sustainable budget without overspending, minimize the taxpayer burden, and leave a stronger Idaho for future generations. Ludwig von Mises, an Austrian School of Economics economist, believed in a very limited and clearly defined view of the government's role based on the Constitution. He believed in the power of free markets, private property, and individual liberty, and he saw government intervention as generally harmful to prosperity and freedom. That said, he did outline specific areas where the government does have a legitimate function.

This paper will explore Idaho's budget growth over the recent five-year period from 2020-2025, which reveals a steady upward spending trajectory, with an average annual increase of approximately 4-6% long-term but shows that we have jumped 8%-15% over the last five years. While individual income tax rates have decreased in Idaho from 6.9% to 5.3 %, ¹ inflation has acted like a hidden tax increase on the middle class. As wages rise to keep up with higher prices, families often move into higher tax brackets or lose deductions, meaning they pay more in taxes even though their real income has not improved. At the same time, printing money fuels inflation, reducing the purchasing power of every dollar they earn.



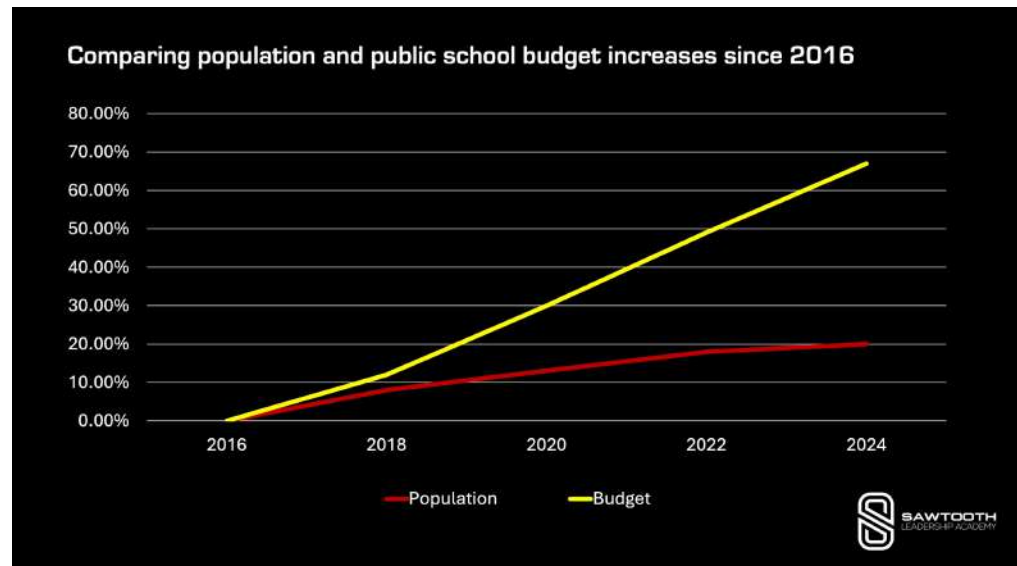
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KEY INFORMATION COLUMN

In the last 10 years, population growth has expanded by 20% while spending growth is close to 70%.

This combination means the middle class ends up squeezed the hardest: they pay more in nominal taxes while their after-tax dollars buy less at the store, leaving them with a heavier effective tax burden despite official rate cuts. These trends and realities indicate a focus on expanding public services but also raise questions about long-term fiscal sustainability.

While I would hardly call myself a ‘Dogeson’ of Mr. Musk, I recommend that private citizens be a part of a DOGE task force to make recommendations, hold accountability, and even slash budget line items in our state spending. Furthermore, the DOGE process would enhance the accountability of government leaders and bureaucrats while constraining out-of-control state spending. As the chart below clearly demonstrates, expenditures by the state of Idaho far outpace population growth, a sign that accountability to voter needs has been lost. In the last 10 years, population growth has expanded by 20% while spending growth is close to 70%. Shockingly, spending growth has outpaced population growth by more than three times.



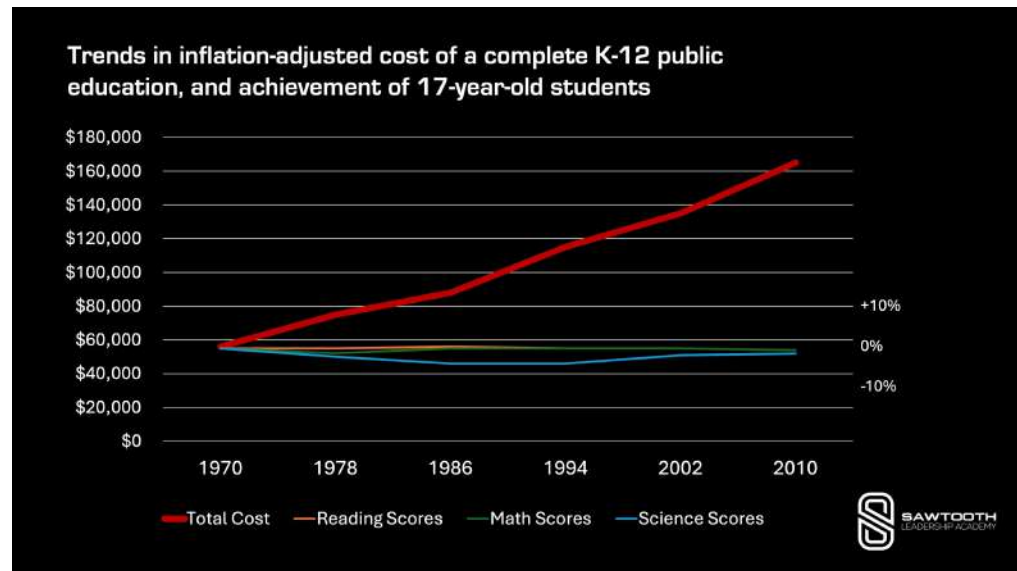
Education spending

Idaho relies on several state and local taxes, such as sales tax, income tax, and property tax, to fund education by over \$2 billion annually.³ This funding supports government schools serving approximately 150,000 students. This math results in spending \$14,290 (on average) per student per year from taxpayers across Idaho. A typical 12-year education now amounts to a staggering \$171,480 per student. Below is a graph of test scores since the 1970s and the cost of a standard 12-year education.

³ “Public School Finance,” Idaho Department of Education, available at <https://www.sde.idaho.gov/finance/>

KEY INFORMATION COLUMN

West Ada is the largest school district in the state. In recent years, it has expanded its central administration, moving from a lean leadership structure to multiple assistant superintendents, principals, and support staff with six-figure salaries.



West Ada is the largest school district in the state. In recent years, it has expanded its central administration, moving from a lean leadership structure to multiple assistant superintendents, principals, and support staff with six-figure salaries. This shift consumed significant funds without delivering clear instructional improvement or increased test scores.

Additionally, perfectly good textbooks have been dumped by moving to digital learning—even while other Idaho districts struggled with shortages. While in the Coeur d’Alene School District (Kootenai County), the district invested close to \$3 million towards Chromebooks (1 to 1 ratio), Wi-Fi upgrades, and essential repairs remained undone, which led the school district to a vote for an additional levy to have enough funding for needs. The real question remains whether the Education Department of Idaho is about education. In Pocatello, Courtney Fisher, the district’s communications director, unveiled a six-month, \$33,500 enrollment campaign that would feature the tagline: “You belong here.”⁴ The campaign would include mailers, online ads, and videos. “Who knew that we’d be in this position where you have to advertise public education? But here we are,” said Heather Clarke, Pocatello/Chubbuck school trustee.⁵

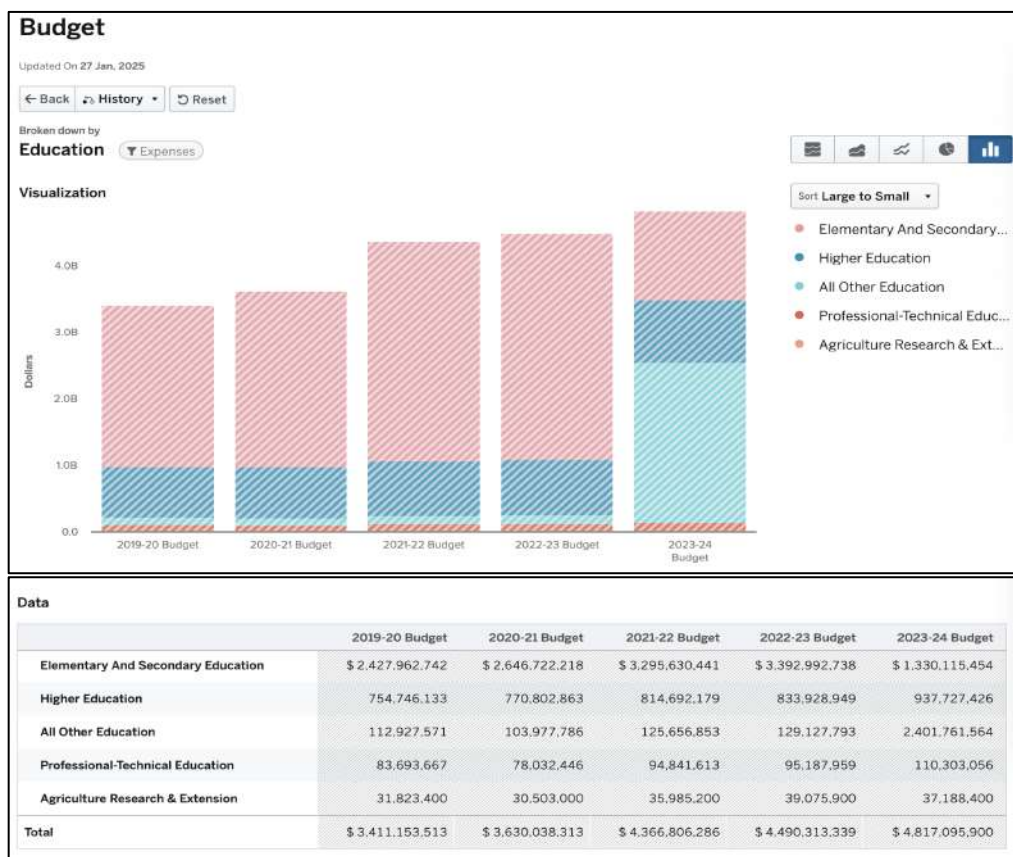
With the recent closure of an elementary school because of poor maintenance, empty school buildings, and the exodus of students, it seems no money will ever be enough. OpenGov (<https://idaho.opengov.com>) allows us to see the steady spending increase. This budget is not specifically K-12. It

⁴ “You belong here,” PCSD25, available at [https://go.boarddocs.com/id/pcsd25/Board.nsf/files/DDG5670EABD1/\\$file/District%20Enrollment%20Marketing%20Campaign%20-%20Updated%201-31-25.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/id/pcsd25/Board.nsf/files/DDG5670EABD1/$file/District%20Enrollment%20Marketing%20Campaign%20-%20Updated%201-31-25.pdf)

⁵ “Pocatello trustees consider online high school, marketing campaign to attract students,” Idaho Education News, February 4, 2025, available at <https://www.idahoednews.org/news/pocatello-trustees-consider-online-high-school-advertising-campaign-to-attract-students>

KEY INFORMATION COLUMN

includes all education expenses because Idaho reclassified spending out of elementary and secondary to all other education, which requires us to look at spending as a whole.



Medicaid in Idaho is another of the state's top spending items on the budget, supporting nearly 720,000 residents as of 2023, which accounts for approximately 40% of the state's population.

Medicaid: Why is this an issue?

Medicaid in Idaho is another of the state's top spending items on the budget, supporting nearly 720,000 residents as of 2023, which accounts for approximately 40% of the state's population.⁶ In 2018, Idaho expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), increasing eligibility to adults earning up to 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL). The expansion aimed to close coverage gaps and improve health outcomes, with initial federal funding covering 90% of the additional costs.⁷

The Medicaid expansion in Idaho significantly increased the number of covered individuals, adding about 78,000 residents to the program between 2018 and 2023.⁸ The expansion reduced the uninsured rate among adults aged

⁶ "Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for Medicaid and Multiplier," KFF, available at <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/federal-matching-rate-and-multiplier/>

⁷ "Idaho Proposition 2, Medicaid Expansion Initiative (2018)," Ballotpedia, available at [https://ballotpedia.org/Idaho_Proposition_2_Medicaid_Expansion_Initiative_\(2018\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Idaho_Proposition_2_Medicaid_Expansion_Initiative_(2018))

⁸ "Status of State Medicaid Expansion Decisions," KFF, available at <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/status-of-state-medicaid-expansion-decisions/>

KEY INFORMATION COLUMN

In the long term, Idaho needs to fight the federal government to allow the state to make the best decisions for its own residents, which is the biggest culprit in potentially bankrupting states across the country.

Nothing in this publication shall be construed as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any legislation.

19-64 from 20.5% in 2017 to 11.2% in 2022. Since Medicaid now covers nearly 40% of Idaho’s population and has reduced the uninsured rate, the state should focus on maintaining this access while ensuring financial sustainability.

One approach is strengthening preventive care and value-based models that lower long-term costs. If Idaho increased the income threshold for those who would qualify, this would immediately help the budget to have future participants in the program. In the long term, Idaho needs to fight the federal government to allow the state to make the best decisions for its own residents, which is the biggest culprit in potentially bankrupting states across the country.

Road spending

Idaho allocates approximately \$600 million annually to maintain and improve its road infrastructure, with over 10,000 miles of state highways.⁹ To reduce costs, Idaho should prioritize preventative maintenance, which has been shown to save up to 50%, thereby extending the lifespan of existing roads and avoiding expensive reconstruction.¹⁰ Implementing innovative construction techniques and leveraging predictive analytics can further cut costs by reducing delays and unnecessary work. By focusing on these strategies, Idaho can better manage its \$600 million yearly transportation budget and maintain a safe, efficient roadway network.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while Idaho has made significant progress over the years, especially with the increase in its budget and income since 2020, it is essential to carefully evaluate how these taxpayer resources are being allocated. DOGE can help identify areas that may be draining funds or not yielding the expected results.

By spotlighting the questions that need to be answered and examining all departments thoroughly, DOGE Idaho can build a more transparent and resilient financial framework. This will not only help maintain the state’s economic growth but also ensure that resources are used effectively to support community goals in the years to come.

⁹ “Transportation Program Funding,” Idaho Transportation Department, available at <https://itd.idaho.gov/funding/>

¹⁰ “Guidelines for cost-effective highway maintenance and construction,” American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, available at <https://transportation.org/>



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonas Yengst, a sophomore at The Ambrose Bridge School, epitomizes versatility and ambition. Balancing his interests in the stock market, project work, and soccer, Jonas seamlessly integrates his passions into his daily routine. Whether he's trading stocks in the morning, refereeing soccer matches in the afternoon, or delving into Roman History, Jonas approaches each endeavor with enthusiasm and dedication.



With aspirations of entrepreneurship and legislative involvement, Jonas envisions a future where he can contribute to his community through volunteer work and establish his own investment company. Despite being far from his California roots, soccer remains a constant source of joy and motivation for Jonas, serving as a reminder of the rewards of perseverance and hard work.



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