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## Letters to the editor, Nov. 18

**- Idaho Statesman****EDUCATION**

Sharpen your math in my classroom

Michael Miller wrote about, but didn't cite, the CATO Institute's mysterious "recent study" about public education and made the following claim: "Since 1970, for every public school student added (in) the United States, 10 public school employees have been added."

This seemed strikingly fishy to me, so I ran a few estimates. The 1970 U.S. Census showed a U.S. population of approximately 180 million. The 2010 U.S. population is estimated to be around 310 million. That is a total increase of 130 million people.

Assuming roughly 13/75 (13 years of school out of 75 years life expectancy) of the population is school age, and assuming roughly 10 percent of them attend private schools or are home-schooled, that leaves a total increase of around 20 million public school students since 1970.

According to Mr. Miller and the CATO Institute, that means there are an additional 200 million people working in American public schools since 1970, a particularly shocking number since this is almost two-thirds of the entire population of the United States!

Either Mr. Miller and CATO are innumerate, or they're lying and fear-mongering. My classroom is open to volunteers, Mr. Miller, and you might sharpen your sketchy computational skills while you're at it.

TODD FOGDALL, Eagle

**TEEN SMOKERS**

High schools ignore on-campus tobacco use

I'm a senior at a high school in the Treasure Valley. I just have to say, I'm a little surprised and very appalled when I walk to my car after class and find students huddled between my car and their Suburbans or large passenger vans, with packs of cigarettes.

First, it's apparent they are skipping class to have a smoke. Not only that, when they're in class, their smoky and tobacco-reeking clothes are enough evidence of what they've been doing outside of class. Where are the teachers and school officers? Why haven't these teenagers been talked to about their tobacco use?

Second, they're on school property. They are right under teachers' and administrators' noses, right in their, presumably, blind spot. Again, where are the school officials?

Third, how did these teenagers get this tobacco anyway? Who illegally sold these death sticks to underage patrons? What happened to the role models that all of today's teenagers need?

What has our community, our country, become, where teenagers in teeny-tiny Meridian, Idaho, can get tobacco and hide behind their pickup trucks and SUVs to have a smoke in the school parking lot?

REBECCA BRIMHALL, Meridian

**WALT MINNICK**

This Democrat was disappointed in you

I can only speak for myself, but I won't bemoan Walt Minnick's loss to Raul Labrador.

I consider myself to be an independent who strongly leans toward Democratic candidates, but not even my voting habits were enough to muster much support for Minnick's campaign.

In his effort to court Republican votes (even though many Republicans would never have voted for him), Minnick