



325 West State Street  
Boise, Idaho 83702

p. 208.334.2150 | 800.458.3271  
f. 208.334.4016

## NEWS RELEASE

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**Information Contacts:**

Gina Persichini, Idaho Commission for Libraries, 208-334-2150 or [gina.persichini@libraries.idaho.gov](mailto:gina.persichini@libraries.idaho.gov)

Teresa Lipus, Idaho Commission for Libraries, 208-334-2150 or [teresa.lipus@libraries.idaho.gov](mailto:teresa.lipus@libraries.idaho.gov)

### Idaho Alliance Seeks to Halt Online Bullying

BOISE, ID – Idaho Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter and Tom Luna, Idaho’s superintendent of public instruction, are among the state leaders who want to prevent online bullying before it becomes widespread.

Bullies are everywhere — even online, the pair note, and bullying in any form should be taken seriously. Otter and Luna aren’t just paying lip service. They are taking part in a statewide initiative led by the Idaho Alliance on Bullying Prevention, a recently formed coalition that seeks to halt or at least curtail the use of online tools and devices to intimidate or harass another person.

In conjunction with October’s designation as national Cyberbullying Prevention/Cyber Safety Month, Otter and Luna are asking Idahoans to be aware of and help eliminate the harmful effects of online bullying.

“Technology allows for exciting opportunities to explore the world around us, but too often this same technology is used to harass and bully,” says Luna in a public service announcement sponsored by the alliance and produced by Idaho Public Television (IdahoPTV).

“Idaho is not immune to cyberbullying,” says Otter in another television spot. “Over 18,000 Idaho kids receive texts or messages from bullies every year. We can help stop this practice with education about the harmful effects of bullying and how to create a zero tolerance for harassment in and out of school.”

Cyberbullying can occur in many forms — not only through texting but also instant messaging, social networks, email, websites, blogs, and other methods of digital communication. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 93 percent of United States teens are online and 73 percent have cell phones that provide avenues of access to those who would bully.

The prevention of this form of harassment, Idaho’s governor and school superintendent say, begins with Idahoans practicing “digital citizenship.”

A recent survey of 8- to 17-year-olds conducted for Microsoft and published in the September issue of *Teaching and Learning Magazine* provided the following information on cyberbullying:

- 58 percent say they know a lot or some about online bullying
- 54 percent are very or somewhat worried about online bullying



- 86 percent report being bullied online and/or offline, although most bullying is offline
- 24 percent admit to bullying someone online
- 42 percent admit to bullying someone offline

To help address these trends, the Idaho Alliance on Bullying Prevention was established earlier this year to offer resources that provide awareness and education about the risks and prevention of cyberbullying.

“Students, parents, and educators are encouraged to learn more about bullying — to recognize it, prevent it, and take action to stop it,” says Ann Joslin, Idaho’s state librarian and head of the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL), a member of the alliance.

In addition to the ICfL and IdahoPTV, the alliance includes the Idaho Education Network, the Office of Attorney General Lawrence Wasden, the Idaho State Department of Education, the Idaho School Boards Association, and the Idaho Association of School Administrators.

One of the alliance’s resources is the ICfL Kids Quest — an online adventure targeted to students in grades 6-9. Students can join the program at <http://lili.org/quest>. Kids Quest is designed to take participants to a variety of online resources designed for young learners: the LearningExpress Library website; LiLI.org’s World Book for Kids; IdahoPTV’s Scout, Classroom Edition and Scout, Idaho Collections; IdahoPTV’s *D4K* science show; and the resources compiled by Idaho Alliance on Bullying Prevention.

After stepping through the several pages of Kids Quest, one page for each site, participants will arrive at an online certificate of completion. Participants who fill out the certificate and complete the following steps are eligible for a drawing for an iPod touch: Print the certificate, have a parent/guardian sign it, add the requested contact information, and take the certificate to your public library. The ICfL will conduct a drawing and select 10 random winners statewide. Kids Quest runs Oct. 9-31 with the drawing to take place on Nov. 1.

The ICfL’s “cyberbullying information and prevention” website — with video, articles, and specific tips for students, parents, and educators — is found at <http://guides.lili.org/cyberbullying>. It includes Gov. Otter’s public service announcement. IdahoPTV’s cyberbullying prevention website is at <http://idahoptv.org/learn/cyberbully/>. Check them out, and find out how you can help prevent online bullying.

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The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICFL) assists libraries to build the capacity to better serve their clientele. To learn more about ICFL, visit <http://libraries.idaho.gov/>.