

Comments (38) |  Recommend (0)

 Enlarge Font

 Decrease Font



Katherine Jones/Idaho Statesman

Hundreds marched from Boise State University to City Hall for the Martin Luther King Jr./Idaho Human Rights Day rally.

#### ELSEWHERE

Video: Jan. 18 Tea Party Rally

Carrying signs and banners, hundreds of Idahoans celebrated Martin Luther King Jr./Idaho Human Rights Day during three different events in Boise on Monday.

A press conference to release the report Facing Race: The 2009 Idaho Legislative Progress Report on Racial Equity, the first of its kind, kicked off the day at 10 a.m. on the east steps of the Statehouse.

Then, marchers from Boise State University walked up Capitol Boulevard, arriving at Boise City Hall shortly after 11 a.m.

And at noon, Gov. Butch Otter read a state proclamation and encouraged all Idahoans to rededicate themselves to nonviolence, community service and volunteerism.

“The rededication of the Capitol should renew our efforts for equality in Idaho,” Otter said.

He didn't mention that he wants to phase out state funding over the next four years to the Idaho Human Rights Commission and the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

"I feel the hypocrisy," said Idaho Human Rights Commissioner Andrea Wassner at Otter's event Monday. "Human rights is not a priority in the state's administration."

In her keynote address at the noon event, Cherie Buckner-Webb urged audience members to contact their legislators and ask them not to reduce the funding. "We have a charge to keep," she said.

The 2009 Idaho Legislative Progress Report on Racial Equity examined 12 pieces of legislation introduced during the regular session and gave low marks.

"Legislative acts are needed to improve the disparity (between whites and people of color)," William Rainford, a professor of social work at Boise State University, told the gathering which included many students who traveled from Southcentral Idaho. "Today's civil rights battle is an economic one and blacks and Latinos are losing the battle."

Maria Mabbutt said people of color are more likely to be uninsured and to work in unhealthy environments than whites.

One of the policy changes she'd like to see are the elimination of the five year bar to allow legal permanent resident children access to the state's Children's Health Insurance Program.

"Idaho must establish an office of minority health to assess the impacts on minorities," she said.

Youth leader Cristian Magallon, a Burley High School sophomore, asked how can a student with a C average pursue their career with ease while another student with an A average can't?

"The difference is race," he said.

At City Hall, President of the Boise State Black Student Alliance David Andrew urged marchers to revitalize Martin Luther King Jr's dream of equality, not just among races but also among people of different sexual orientations.

"The reason we love this country is we can be the architects of our own destiny," Andrew said.

Bethann Stewart: 377-6393