

**Nursing task force**

I must commend Gov. Risch for empaneling a nursing task force, and thank all 18 task force members for answering the call to work on this challenging and complex problem. However, as a registered nurse with more than 30 years of acute-care experience and an expert in the nursing shortage, I was somewhat concerned about Ms. Evans' comment, "We don't have to define the issue." On the contrary, I think it's imperative that if the task force is truly interested in change and success it would first revisit the current "definition," evaluate whether these assumptions are correct or not, and then move forward with solutions.

As someone who has been at the forefront of this issue for too many years to count, I can state with some confidence that the No. 1 roadblock to solving the nursing shortage is that those currently with a seat at the table have been working with the same set of assumptions for the past 20 years, with no solid, long-term solutions. So I encourage the Idaho task force to think outside the box and take the time to revisit the issue before embarking on their mission. Hint: a core issue is "a failure of management."

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ARTICLE PUBLISHED AUG 12, 2006

**Task force tackles nursing shortage Risch appoints group of educators, lawmakers and health care professionals to fix what he calls a 'crisis'** Gov. Jim Risch appointed a group of 18 educators, lawmakers and other health care professionals from throughout Idaho on Friday to tackle Idaho's nursing shortage.

"This particular field has not only a problem, it's a crisis," Risch said at a news conference. "It's in crisis mode, and it has been in crisis mode for some time."

Risch said 800 students were turned away from Idaho's eight nursing programs last year because the programs already were at capacity.

Risch vowed in his inaugural address in June to organize the state's university leaders to make room for more Idaho nursing students. He said Friday that he had gathered the "best and the brightest people in Idaho" to solve the nursing shortage problem.

The task force is expected to develop ways the state can help nursing schools hire more faculty, educate more student nurses and improve the shortage of nurses statewide, Risch said. Recommendations likely will include requests for money to fund more faculty positions, classroom capacity or other nursing programs.

Many nursing homes and rural hospitals already are facing a shortage of nurses. The entire state will face a severe shortage of nurses in the next decade because most nurses are nearing retirement age and nursing schools aren't turning out enough students to replace them, nursing officials have said.

Without more state funding to expand nursing schools, they say hospitals might have to turn patients away.

Pam Springer, chairwoman of Boise State University's nursing department, and the other task force members said they are anxious to meet and start writing solutions to the problem.

"We're finally being recognized," Springer said. "It's fabulous."

The group expects to give Risch a list of recommendations by the end of October.

"Because we don't have to define the issue, I think we can start (coming up with solutions) this afternoon at 1 p.m.," said Sandra Evans, executive director of the Idaho Board of Nursing and chair of the task force, before she headed to the task force's first meeting Friday afternoon.

Springer said later that the meeting was productive. The task force discussed issues related to faculty recruitment, student admissions, data analysis and the use of technology in nursing education, she said.