

Candidate Statement:

Mary Souza  
Idaho State Senator, District 4, Coeur d'Alene

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SECRETARY OF STATE  
STATE OF IDAHO

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Biography:

- Born and raised in Spokane, Washington, has lived in Coeur d'Alene for 29 years.
- Married to Rick for 38 years, four grown children and one grandchild.
- Bachelor's degree in Nursing from Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA
- Master's degree in Health Education from Whitworth University, Spokane, WA
- Critical care RN and Clinical Instructor for 10 years
- Co-owner, with my husband, of Design Events, Inc. for 32 years
- General Manager of Design Events, Inc. for 15 of those years
- Political columnist and community activist for 10 years
- Elected to Idaho State Senate in 2014

Why Vote for Me:

At 63, I bring a lifetime of experience to this job of representing Coeur d'Alene in the State Senate. My background as a Mom, Nurse, Teacher, Business Owner and Manager prepared me to evaluate our state government. My years as a community activist, sitting on many local committees, taught me to look beyond the surface, ask questions and search out answers. And my efforts as a political writer showed me the importance of communicating with citizens; we all want to know what may affect our lives.

## My Top Priorities:

1. **Education:** I sit on the Senate Education Committee and believe we are starting to move Idaho education in the right direction. Two years ago we passed the Teacher's Career Ladder which offers a better and predictable pay structure for our most valuable asset in Education, our teachers. For several years there has been an effort by our Federal government to control education at the local level through the use of funding tied to strict requirements. Late last year, Congress passed the ESSA bill, the Every Student Succeeds Act, which returns a great portion of power and control back to the states. Idaho has already started to look at alternative testing options, innovative school incentives and has created a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) center. Additionally, we have strengthened our Career & Technical Education programs for professional certifications to fill long-needed good jobs and advance our state's economic development.
2. **Jobs & Economic Development:** There is a close relationship between education, jobs and business. You can't have one without the others, as the old saying goes. Idaho has improved its overall job numbers, but there are still large areas of the state struggling to get out of the deep recession. The northern part of our state has been slow to recover, and job levels in North Idaho are still a concern. Recent interest in robotics, aeronautics and new technologies are offering hope to our region. The new North Idaho College technology building in Rathdrum, next to the skills training high school KTEC, will be open for students this September 2016. The more we, as a state and community, can keep taxes low, offer equal opportunities for all businesses to grow, and diversify our education options, the stronger our local economy will become.
3. **Urban Renewal:** After studying this issue for years as a community activist and being part of the Legislative Interim Committee to study Urban Renewal laws in Idaho last year, I have been working closely with our Mayor of Coeur d'Alene to affect some significant changes in the use of urban renewal in our community. Mayor Widmyer led the first de-annexation of an urban renewal district since the new law, and perhaps the first ever in this state. It returned close to \$600,000 in taxes to the City of Coeur d'Alene, as well as money to the County and many other taxing districts. This was a bold move by the Mayor and the UR Board, one which is now being contemplated by several other districts in the state. My work on this issue will continue.