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Senators see the signs, undo IB de-funding

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Those black helicopters circling the Orem home of state Sen. Margaret Dayton every night for the last month were piloted, it turns out, by some of the state's brightest, hardest-working high school students.

Now that's what I call moonlighting.

In case you missed it, Dayton stunned the education community earlier this week when she declared that a program for some of the state's best students is really part of an international conspiracy.

This was news to the seven Utah high schools that host the program, including Provo High School, where the children of many of Dayton's own constituents go to school, my family included.

It was news to the following colleges and universities in the state that give additional consideration in the admissions process to students who complete the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program: Brigham Young, Westminster, Utah, Utah State, Utah Valley State, Southern Utah, Salt Lake Community and Eastern Utah.

Dayton's conspiracy theory was flimsy. She and Sen. Darin Peterson, R-Nephi, said they had read on the Internet that IB is a front for an effort to use the United Nations to overthrow the U.S. Constitution and create a single world government. Sen. Howard Stephenson, R-Draper, voted with them in the Senate Education Committee.

The resulting 3-3 vote stalled a bill to provide \$300,000 for IB programs at Bountiful, Clearfield, Hillcrest, Hunter, Skyline, West and Provo high schools. The schools cobble together dollars from other areas to fund their IB programs.

Frontal assaults led by Dayton are not new. She vigorously attacked the federal No Child Left Behind law. What was strange about her attack on IB was that the students most hurt by NCLB are the gifted and talented children that IB serves.

IB students complete courses in a way similar to AP classes, but those who complete the entire two-year curriculum for high school juniors and seniors earn a diploma. Students also complete an extended essay and engage in more than 100 hours of creativity, action and service hours.

Little time is left for black helicopters.

The scariest part of Dayton's and Peterson's objections to IB was that they said they based their decisions on what they learned from that fine tool of knowledge, the Internet.

The Internet is reliable only if you read reliable sources. The Internet is, after all, the same place that says my employment history includes a stint working at Bikini Cuts.

Can you imagine?

Better if we don't.

I never did work there, but I once wrote an article about Bikini Cuts in 2005, which obviously was good enough for a Web site called ZoomInfo.

Fortunately, Peterson visited an IB class and saw what really goes on rigorous learning and Dayton read the flood of e-mails sent to her in support of IB. Better informed, the senators changed their minds and IB will get \$100,000 in funding from the Legislature.

The black helicopters landed and, by Mel Gibson, they got it right. For that, they deserve praise and the proverbial tip of the cap, even if we continue to poke a little fun and say this hat is made of tinfoil.

Better yet, since they've now been mentioned in the same article as Bikini Cuts, they may even get to update their resumes.

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