**Deadline: January 18**

**Head/Title** - Heart of Darkness Spotlight: Defeating anti-education “Luna Laws” in Idaho

**Outlet Name** - Public News Service

**Contact name and email** - Matt Hemmendinger, matt@publicnewsservice.org

**250 words max on how your story made an impact**

In November 2012, Idaho’s teachers were vindicated against major odds in a long-term right-to-work state. Sometimes it takes tenacious reporting, for years, for the “sudden” win. PNS has been closely covering their struggles for over a decade, producing 100+ broadcast/print news stories in that time redistributed 1,000s of times on 100s of other media outlets blanketing the state.

Here’s the story:

Drowned out by other major actions being taken to erode the strength of unions in other states, Idaho’s legislators quietly enacted a set of requirements in 2011 that removed job security protections for teachers, tied teacher pay to performance and made it far more difficult for teachers to retain their jobs. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna branded the measures as beneficial to students and imperative for their success.

Prior to the enactment of Luna’s changes (which came to be known as the Luna Laws), we were covering creative solutions to handle budget shortfalls for Idaho schools. These stories established a positive tone of coverage for teachers and teachers’ unions and led a dialogue of inclusive solutions. When Luna’s divisive measures were put in place, we covered the real impacts of the laws on teachers, and Idaho hemorrhaged teachers at an alarming rate.

To general amazement, a majority of Idahoans shot down **all three referendums** on the Luna Laws and re-established the protections for teachers in the state. The Public News Service continues to cover education issues in Idaho through the Northern Rockies News Service.