

"ANYTHING TWO PEOPLE KNOW IS NOT A SECRET."

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Preston University shut down by the State of Alabama!

While there is some personal satisfaction in the knowledge that the two largest degree sellers that made Wyoming their nest (Kennedy-Western University and Preston University) have had their Wyoming and Alabama, respectively, licenses to perpetrate fraud on innocents around the world terminated, there is little solace when one thinks of all the gullible and trusting consumers who paid millions of dollars to these two operations for "degrees" worth little more than the parchment stock they were printed on.

Each of these nefarious operations still have their defenders. Both, Preston especially, spread a great deal of cash and perks around. Legislators took junkets. Department of Education staffers also took junkets and appeared in degree sellers' brochures, with their arms all wrapped around the sleazy operators.

Kennedy-Western tried an end run to accreditation. First, they adopted a name near and dear to Wyoming residents, "Warren," to camouflage who they were. They enlisted Wyoming personalities to their Warren National University board of directors, including the former superintendent of public instruction, Judy Catchpole.

For the life of me, I can't see what some with reasonable intelligence saw in these guys. Any amount of research would confirm that they were in the business of selling degrees, not advancing education. Had they been engaged in providing education, the degree would still have had little value because it came from an institution that was unaccredited. Had a public library tried to issue similar degrees, simply because they could provide the textbooks necessary to learn, they would have been stopped immediately.

Kennedy-Western made a stab at accreditation and were not recommended for candidacy by a legitimate accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education so they withdrew their application and announced their closing.

See page 12 for the story about Kennedy-Western University (renamed Warren National University) closing.

In their closing letter to "students," KWU/WNU told "students" they could transfer to Preston. That would be illegal.

Preston University, after professing for years to be legitimate and investing a great deal of money toward the support of Wyoming legislators, has operated in Alabama since scurrying from Wyoming after a law change that required them to be in pursuit of accreditation or amscray.

They chose to flee. Preston University set up in Montgomery, Alabama. Rather than describe who they are, and who they were when they were allowed a protected exile in Wyoming, the words of the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education say it best. (*The entire three page letter from ADPSE to Preston can be read on the Cheyenne Herald website.*)

In her letter to Preston's "chancellor," the State of Alabama Private School License Director, Lynne R. Thrower, wrote:

"During our [three] onsite visits, it was determined that the location for the institution is based out of a virtual office setting which is not staffed properly nor has operating equipment, the school is not accredited nor is it in the process of accreditation and no up to date records were available for viewing."

"GFP (IV) Minimum School Rules - none of these objectives have been met successfully." (*Letters "A" through "L" are listed and detailed.*)

"There are no entrance test thresholds applied, therefore, there are no assurances that the student possesses the necessary skills to achieve and succeed in a given program of study."

"All assessment decisions are based on a fee for diploma rather than class attendance, lecture participation and projects; no quantifiable tests are used to assess student and program effectiveness."

"Evidence has been received by the Department that Preston University is operating and domiciled in the State of Wyoming without proper licensure from the Wyoming Department of Education."

"It is required that Preston University cease and desist all operations in Alabama. ... any institution that knowingly operates in violation of the laws of the State of Alabama does so through the use of fraud and deception."

Governor's pay

It would be easy to come out in opposition to a pay raise for the Wyo governor.

While the \$105,000 a year salary is in the bottom third of governors across the country (only 12 states pay their governor less than Dave Freudenthal now makes), there are perks that make that package far more lucrative. What is a house worth? A private airplane, for which a governor can combine personal travel with official state travel? A car and driver? State paid health insurance at that age?

It would also be easy to challenge the salary being sought for Wyoming's next governor. At \$152,934 a year, our governor would be at the same salary as the governors of Virginia and Washington. Only California, New York, Michigan, New Jersey, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Illinois would be higher paid. Remember, population of Wyoming is 51st of all - smaller even than the District of Columbia.

New Jersey's governor, Jon Corzine, does not accept his \$175,000 salary - he accepts but \$1.00 a year.

When compared to Wyoming's congressional delegation, a \$152,934 salary for the state's chief executive seems a bargain. Mike, Dr. John and Cindy each receive \$174,000 a year plus perks. And they will have little sway in this session and, unless Republicans bounce back and reassume majority in either or both bodies in their term(s), they won't have much influence in the foreseeable future.

Such a raise would not be effective until after the 2010 elections, when all five state executive offices are up for election. Those who think Dave is worth even less than what he's now paid need not worry about him cashing the bigger checks unless he challenges Wyo term limits law that will take him out of office after 2010.

The average salary for the nation's governors is now just less than \$125,000 a year. It would be easy to make the argument that the state with the 51st largest population - the smallest of all would be another way to state it - should not receive more than the average salary of all 50 governors. A couple of the states with lower governor's salaries right now are Colorado (\$90,000) and Tennessee (\$85,000). Tennessee's governor is wealthy and he gives his salary back to the state. California's governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, could receive \$206,500 but chooses to return it to the State, also.

Arizona's last elected governor, who just accepted a position in the Obama Cabinet, made but \$95,000 in salary and was not provided a house in which to live. No wonder she elected to go to D.C. - more money, perks and multiples of prestige.

As some have been quick to point out, being governor has the ultimate perk - it is a road to the White House. Many candidates elected president since 1968 were once governors. Going backward - George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter had occupied State Houses before becoming president. Along with election after having been V.P. (George H.W. Bush, Richard Nixon and LBJ), former governors are the only ones elected president since the days of JFK, who came from the Senate. Gerald Ford had been in the U.S. House but he was never elected president.

Being governor is a stepping stone to the presidency - as well as a well-greased ticket to a Cabinet position. Obama has taken many, including Arizona's Janet Napolitano? Ditto George W.

A show of hands, please. How many believe a head football coach at any Division 1 program is a more important position than being governor of any state? The average salary for D-1 head football coaches is over \$900,000 a year.

How many State employees are paid more than Dave and the other four elected State officials in the executive branch?

When I consider what is a reasonable salary for an office, any office, I only take into account the office. Not the current holder. Obviously, I would not support paying Jim McBride a penny more than he's already getting. In fact, I could argue that paying him a penny is too much. But, I focus on the office - not the man or woman currently occupying it.

I would support higher salaries for the governor (who is more equal than the others similarly elected) and the other four (secretary of state, auditor, treasurer and superintendent of public instruction). If the salaries being proposed were approved, it would cost the State \$215,934 a year - not much in the grand scheme of things. But, instead of 45.65% raises, I would suggest something more like 25%. I don't think Wyo's governor should be among the top 10 paid governors. It seems \$131,250 for the gov and \$115,000 for the others should be sufficient.

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