



Capitol Review

A Weekly Legislative Report

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Idaho has a very diversified legislature. Recently we were asked to help identify the various occupations of members of the 2012 Legislative Body. In a very rough calculation, we came up with the following categories and the number of the 105 legislators who fit into one of those categories. This is why we are often referred to as a *citizen legislature* and not a professional body of lawmakers.

Accounting	2
Agribusiness	3
Architect.....	1
Attorney.....	8
Business	28
Consultant.....	3
Education	6
Engineer.....	1
Farm/Rancher	21
Insurance	4
Medical.....	1
Physician.....	2
Public Relations	4
Retired	20
Unknown	1

AGRICULTURE PRODUCERS FORUM

Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Alaska make up **Region 10 of the EPA** with the head office located in Seattle, WA. A new Administrator, Dennis McLarren, recently made a visit to Idaho and participated in an afternoon session titled, "*Agriculture Producers Forum*". The goal of the forum was to allow Administrator McLarren and his staff to hear from producers and agriculture industry folks the challenge they are facing in working with the federal agency. Two formal presentations were included in the agenda from the **Idaho Dairymen's Association** and the **Idaho Cattle Association**. Both delivered very clear and distinct messages, "*EPA has failed to continue efforts to work with the MOU's (Memorandum of Understanding) that have been in place for both industries*".

Other topics that surfaced during the nearly four-hour session included: TMDL's, NPDES Permits, issues with field burning, issues related to the aquaculture industry, particulate standards, and the general attitude of EPA staff towards working with producers on environmental concerns.

Several staff from Seattle's EPA office were present including **former Idaho State Senator Kate Kelly** who was employed at one time in her career by DEQ in Idaho. Administrator McLarren announced that Senator Kelly would be working to form a task force to address issues of concern between agriculture and the EPA. Following the shopping list of concerns brought by industry, we are confident the task force has plenty of items on their plate. The event was well attended by producers, industry leaders, commodity groups, ISDA staff and Idaho EPA staff. Thanks to everyone who participated and helped tell the story related to the overreaching authority of EPA in our industry.

ICC/FFA CENARRUSA DAY ON THE HILL

On Monday, January 23, nearly **600 FFA members from across Idaho**, along with invited government officials and industry leaders and nearly 70 legislators assembled at The Riverside Hotel for a **special day of recognizing public policy leaders in Idaho**. The Idaho FFA Association presented **Honorary FFA Degrees** to **Director of the ISDA Celia Gould** and former chairman of the House Ag Affairs Committee, **Representative Tom Trail**. The Idaho Cooperative Council, representing farmer-owned cooperatives throughout Idaho, also presented **Friend of the Industry Awards** to **Senator Russell Fulcher** and **Representative Dell Raybould**. Special guests at the event were **former Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa and his wife Freda**. Mr. Cenarrusa served the citizens of Idaho for over 50 years as a public servant.

ACTION IN THE CAPITOL

As we head into the last week of January, there is not much to show for action by the Idaho Legislature. Committees are starting to meet with more regularity and now that the economic outlook has been established, there will be more and more discussions related to funding for various projects in state government. One thing that has been noticeable is the new security provisions that have been added almost daily due to the **Occupy Boise movement** and increased traffic inside the Capitol. Some committee meeting rooms have been "standing room only" as they have heard testimony on a variety of issues in these opening days of the session. Floor time, however, has been usually less than a full 30-minute period. But, just wait for February -- **by then, the action should begin.**

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO CALS

Wednesday was University of Idaho day at the Capitol. Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, **Dr. John Hammel**, presented in front of the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC) on behalf of the College. In his presentation he discussed the issues facing Research and Extension at the University and the faculty of CALS.

The **most pressing matter** was with the **last few years of cuts** by the state, vacant positions have been left open or research scientists have moved on to other institutions for better pay. Dean Hammel urged JFAC to institute the Governor's State of the State Address proposal **of a one-time, 3% increase to all state employees** including the University of Idaho, to help stabilize faculty income. He also impressed upon the committee **how important research is to Idaho agriculture** and its economy. With net **farm incomes in Idaho during 2011 reaching a record high of \$2.64 billion**, Hammel concluded that research must be a priority for agriculture to continue to be a stabilizing force in Idaho.

REDISTRICTING

The Redistricting Commission appointees' task continues to be the **hot topic** in this year's Legislative Session. Last week, the commission's proposal for new redistricting lines was **declared invalid** by the Supreme Court. The court concluded that there were **too many counties broken up** for the plan to go forward. On average, approximately 7 county lines are crossed in the creation of new districts by the commission. The current plan includes 12 counties that are in separate districts. To further complicate the issue, those who appoint the commissioners were **stopped** by the Supreme Court **from replacing** two current seats on the commission.

This leaves us with the **same commission as before** and with a **shortened timetable** to be able to draw a third plan before legislators need to file to run for office and election in the May 15 primary. There has been proposed legislation to change the primary date to August, but it looks unlikely to pass at this point.

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