



CAPITOL REVIEW

A WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

AMG : RICK WAITLEY | ROGER BATT | BENJAMIN KELLY | PATXI LARROCEA-PHILLIPS
55 SW 5TH AVENUE, SUITE 100 MERIDIAN, ID 83642 PH: 208-888-0988 FX: 208-888-4586

A Weekly Legislative Report

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HEMP LEGISLATION

The first piece of legislation to deal with hemp production in Idaho was introduced this week. **Representative Dorothy Moon introduced the legislation in the Senate Health and Welfare Committee** for their consideration. S1241 aims to align state law with federal law contained in the 2018 Farm Bill. It would change Idaho law and allow the growing and selling of hemp products that contain 0.3% or less of THC, the cannibal compound that gives marijuana its high. Earlier in the week, **Governor Little, Representative Dorothy Moon and Representative Judy Boyle went to the Idaho State Police facility** to learn more about the testing equipment the Idaho State Police have purchased for the potential crop in Idaho. An attempt to legalize hemp was made during the 2019 legislature.

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO INITIATIVES

Dean Michael Parrella with the University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (UI CALS) presented before the House and Senate Agricultural Affairs Committees this week. Dean Parrella highlighted a handful of initiatives that CALS has been working on for the past few years. He stressed to lawmakers that in order to hire and retain highly qualified faculty and staff, the **facilities needed to be modernized**. In order to modernize the facilities, CALS has entered into a number of partnerships that include both Industry participants and the State of Idaho. One of the most current initiatives rolled out in the Treasure Valley is the renovations to the **Parma Research & Extension Center**. These renovations will include upgrading equipment and revamping infrastructure to state of the art technology. On the other hand, one of the most recently completed projects is the structure updates to the **Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension & Education Center** just north of Salmon, Idaho. At this location CALS updated the classroom and outreach facility. CALS does a large amount of beef cattle research at this facility in conjunction to its Rinker Rock Creek Ranch site. Dean Parrella also updated legislators on the status of the Idaho Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (CAFÉ). At its completion this project will be the largest integrated research facility in the country. Over the past

eight months the State Board of Education finalized the **purchase of the Rupert property** that will be financed in partnership with the Idaho Dairymen's Association. This is a large accomplishment to begin moving this project forward.

WOLF-FREE ZONES

On Wednesday, Senator Bert Brackett introduced legislation that would help control wolves. S1247 would provide for wolf-free zones and the zones would be based on big game hunting units. Other areas where depredation has occurred in four of the immediate past 5 years will be designated as chronic depredation zones and would have increased wolf control opportunities under the legislation. There are 19 hunting units scattered across the central part of the state that would qualify as chronic depredation zones. Specifically, the legislation would create wolf-free zones in 11 hunting units that roughly cover the southwestern part of the state. Those areas are thought to have few if any wolves and Brackett said he would like to keep the animals from expanding into them. **The Senate Resources and Environment Committee voted along party lines** to clear the way for a full hearing on S1247. Senator Bert Brackett is a rancher in the area designated for wolf-free zones. **The Idaho Department of Fish and Game** stated that there are an estimated 1,000 wolves in Idaho. In both wolf-free and depredation zones, wolves could be killed year-round by a hunter that has a valid hunting license and wolf tag.

2020 ELECTION CYCLE

The primary election is quickly approaching in May. Candidates and challengers are beginning to file the initial documents. **Filings are taking place each week with the Secretary of State**. The requirements are fairly simple:

- At least 21 years old at the time of the General Election.
- A citizen of the United States.
- An elector of the state at the time of the General Election.

- An elector of the **Legislative** District for at least 1 year at the time of the General Election.

This might be your time to consider serving your state as a candidate. More information about the filing deadlines and process can be found at the Idaho Secretary of State website.

STORING AND HANDLING IDAHO WINES

Roger Batt, introduced H343 this week which is legislation authorizing third-party businesses “**Bonded Wine Warehouses**” to be established in Idaho for the sole purpose of storing and handling wines produced by vintners and wineries. Currently, many Idaho vineyards are using storage units outside the state of Idaho which is an added expense for transportation for their product. H343 would clear the way for a business venture to store the wines inside the state of Idaho. The business entity would need to secure a license in the amount of \$300 paid to the state of Idaho which would result in an increase in the budget for the Idaho State Police. Roger is representing the Idaho Wine and Grape Growers on this issue.

CHICKEN DINNER ROAD RESOLUTION

Representative Scott Syme from Caldwell introduced a House Concurrent Resolution this week addressing a road in Canyon County – **Chicken Dinner Road**. The road was originally called Lane 12 and living on the road was Morris and Laura Lamb. Mrs. Lamb was famous for her fried chicken, apple pie and hot rolls and the Lambs were close friends of Governor and Mrs. Ben Ross. In 1930 the Lambs invited the Governor and his wife to dinner. In route, Mrs. Ross remarked to the Governor about the poor conditions of Lane 12 and the Governor told Mrs. Lamb that if she could get the road graded and with gravel that he would work to have it oiled. Mrs. Lamb approached the Canyon County Commissioners and pleaded her case and the Governor remained faithful to his promise. The next day, big yellow words were printed on the road surface “Lamb’s Chicken Dinner Avenue”. Recently, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatments of Animals) approached the commissioners requesting the name to be changed since it was degrading to poultry. In response, the Mayor of Caldwell rejected the notion of changing the name. HCR25 would establish the road as having historic value and the **name would always remain Chicken Dinner Road**.

PROPERTY TAX PROPOSALS

Lawmakers have been meeting prior to the legislative session in order to address rising property taxes and have made the issue a priority. Representative Mike Moyle, Star, introduced H355 this week to **freeze the property tax portion of a taxing district’s budget for one year**. This effort would be a stopgap to ensure that local taxing districts only receive the same amount as the previous year. H355 does not fix the problem that needs to be addressed, property taxes would not go up or down, but in the event that nothing can be agreed upon

this year, it would allow for more time and stop the bleeding. The more substantial proposal introduced was **H353 that would cap property tax growth at 3% a year**. Currently property tax growth is already capped at 3% but encompasses the value of new construction and annexations, which can drastically inflate taxes received by local taxing districts in times of growth. Both bills would let local governments override the cap if two-thirds of voters support it. Another proposal, H359, was also introduced and it would dramatically change the tax structure in Idaho and completely repeal property taxes. Representative Jason Monks, Meridian, is sponsoring the legislation that would shift the burden onto the 6% sales tax. **It would replace the lost revenue by increasing the sales tax to 11%** providing an estimated \$1.8 billion in the first year.

There is sure to be more proposals coming but it is important to continue to support **proposals that do not shift taxes onto landowners in our communities**. In more rural and agricultural counties, agricultural property will pay more in total property tax dollars. A tax shift occurs when you artificially exempt one class of property and force another class of property to pay that tax. This can be seen in possible proposals to increase the homeowner’s exemption. The increased exemption from the homeowner would simply be shifted to the rest of the tax base.

RURAL CAUCUS

In doing some research there are many states that have **Rural Caucuses** in their state legislature. When you look up the definition of a caucus this is what you would most likely find: **“a group of people united to promote an agreed-upon cause.”** Rep. Caroline Troy, Genesee (R) and Rep. Sally Toone, Gooding (D) have been entertaining the idea that Idaho may have need for a rural caucus allowing legislators of either party and either House to find common ground related to rural issues. While Idaho is experiencing unprecedented growth in many areas of the state, reapportionment is just around the corner which most likely will allow urban areas to gain more representation and rural areas to lose representation – the timing might be perfect. **A preliminary meeting is scheduled** around the first of February to further explore the idea. In doing a quick tally we found 21 of the current serving members in the 2020 Idaho Legislature have a direct tie to agriculture. That represents 20% of the legislators, however, those with a rural interest and dedicated to maintaining and protecting Idaho’s rural nature may attract a few more legislators. Food Producers of Idaho gave the idea a green light this week and offered their support to the concept.

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