



CAPITOL REVIEW

A WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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A Weekly Legislative Report

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WHAT IS CAPITOL REVIEW?

You are receiving Capitol Review, a publication produced **each Friday** during the Idaho Legislature, as a board member of a client served by Association Management Group. Lobbyists **Rick Waitley, Roger Batt, Benjamin Kelly and Patxi Larrocea-Phillips** are working to keep you informed about legislative issues facing the 2021 Idaho Legislature. If you have questions on issues or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact our office. Association Management Group will be representing the following clients during the 2021 legislature:

Rick Waitley/Benjamin Kelly/Patxi Larrocea-Phillips:

- Food Producers of Idaho
- Idaho Alfalfa & Clover Seed Growers Association
- Idaho Hay and Forage Association
- Idaho Honey Industry Association
- Idaho Onion Growers' Association
- Idaho Noxious Weed Control Association
- Nezperce Prairie Grass Growers Association
- Northwest Agricultural Cooperative Council
- Northwest Farm Credit Services

Roger Batt:

- Bayer USA, LLC
- Idaho Eastern Oregon Seed Association
- Idaho Grape Growers and Wine Commission
- Idaho Ground Water Association
- Idaho Heartland Coalition
- Idaho Mint Growers Association
- Idaho-Oregon Seed Pesticide Council
- Treasure Valley Water Users Association
- Western Equipment Dealers Association

AG ALL STAR AWARDS PRESENTED

The current restrictions on gatherings resulted in a new method of presenting the Ag All Star awards to 94 legislators who had achieved this status during the 2020 legislative session. Those that were not re-elected or retired were mailed their awards. Those that were in the Legislature stopped by on Wednesday afternoon and picked up their award, had their picture

taken with Food Producer President Stacey Satterlee, were treated to a homemade cinnamon roll which had Idaho sugar and Idaho wheat, a carton of milk (compliments of Idaho Dairymen's Assn. and Northwest Dairy Assn.), and mints from the Idaho Mint Commission. While it was not the usual All Idaho Banquet and time of interaction with industry leaders, it was the best possible option under the circumstances.

STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

Governor Little presented his "**Building Idaho's Future**" plan during the annual State of the State address on Monday. Unlike any other year, his address was streamed live from the Lincoln Auditorium and not presented from the dais of the House Chamber in front of the full body of the Idaho Legislature and Idaho Supreme Court. The components of the Building Idaho's Future plan include:

TAX RELIEF: \$455 million in tax relief which includes \$295 million in one-time tax relief and \$160 million in permanent tax cuts for Idahoans.

TRANSPORTATION: \$126 million in state and local highway infrastructure projects and \$80 million in new and ongoing transportation funding.

EDUCATION: Investments in literacy to close achievement gaps that widened for some students during the pandemic. His plan invests in higher education and career technical education training programs across the state that have been funded in previous years.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: Investing in the items necessary to support frontline personnel at the Idaho State Police and training for our local frontline police officers.

BROADBAND: \$35 million allocated for new investments in internet connectivity for underserved areas to improve commerce, economic growth, and education. \$50 million in broadband infrastructure investments had already been allocated last year.

WATER AND AGRICULTURE: Supports major water infrastructure projects and needed projects for agriculture and outdoor recreation.

SMALL BUSINESS: Requests more support for small businesses in Idaho, on top of the \$300 million in direct support for small businesses last year.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE INVESTMENTS: Makes strategic investments in overdue needs in our criminal justice system, to break the expensive revolving door of repeat offenders. Other funds would catch up on the backlog of deferred maintenance in state buildings and address other needs.

Outside of the Building Idaho's Future plan the Governor's budget includes more than \$250 million in total funds to reinforce the state's public health infrastructure to continue responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. His budget would leave a **projected ending balance of \$185 million this year and \$138 million next year**, for a cushion for economic uncertainty. The Governor hopes to boost state rainy day funds by \$230 million to expand the state's preparedness for the same economic uncertainty as federal funding tapers off.

SEPARATION OF POWERS

Throughout the campaign cycle there has been criticism by some state leaders as to how Governor Little has responded to the Coronavirus. During the Special Session in Boise, several bills were proposed but did not get full traction. **Legislators were seeking proposals that would have balanced the powers between the legislative and executive branches of government as it relates to emergencies.** However, with the legislature back in town for a longer period of time, several pieces of legislation have already surfaced, and more are being rumored to surface for ways to solve this problem. This time the legislature will be staying in town long enough that they could potentially override a veto by the Governor. There appears to be good swath of opinions and proposals on this topic.

On Thursday, Representative Brent Crane introduced legislation that would **lift the limit on all gatherings statewide.** There are other bills and resolutions that place the power for crisis management in the hands of the 105 legislators over the Executive Branch and one that **would allow the legislature to call itself back into session whenever 60% of both the House of Representatives and Senate membership desire.** Though the proposals have been printed into bills, there is still a large amount of discussion and testimony from citizens as the bills proceed through the legislative process.

SO WHAT IS DIFFERENT THIS YEAR?

COVID-19 has definitely made its statement related to how the legislature is operating. We have discovered **more restrictions**, locked doors and challenges in trying to connect with legislators. There are additional State Police present in the hallways and throughout the capitol. **Seating has been limited** in committee rooms and those rooms have more technology to allow people to connect virtually for hearings and presentations. Seating capacity and access to the galleries of the chambers have been reduced. Most likely there will be very few field trips. When we received the social calendar for legislative events this week the new theme seems to be "boxed lunches." Many events were listed as *"stop by room so and so and pick up your box lunch, enjoy your lunch at your computer and connect with our organization virtually at this address."* Lawsuits have been filed claiming that the legislature should not be meeting since there is not open access to the system for everyone, especially those that feel their **health could be in jeopardy.** This could present some challenging days ahead. When you enter a conversation you almost have to ask the other person – "mask or no mask?" Some prefer that you visit only by phone or computer and others still want to sit face to face (at a distance) and then will indicate their mask preference. We are learning to be prepared for most anything when visiting the Capitol and to follow the protocols of that day.

PARMA R AND E CENTER

The Parma Research and Extensions Center got a real boost on Monday during the **State of the State address when the Governor announced his support of the \$3 million from state funds.** The Idaho State Board of Education had already authorized the design for the facility and a RFP was released to hire an architecture firm. A design committee including all faculty at the Parma Center has been working on the final layout of the facility, which will take about a year to design.

Parma had been elevated to the University of Idaho's #1 project. Despite the university's budget challenges, **CALS remains committed to contribute \$1 million** to the project from internal resources. The Governor's request is an important part to the funding puzzle for Parma. **The industry has raised \$3 million** from commodity, farm organizations and agribusiness. It appears we have a **green light** for the Parma R and E Center's future.

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