



CAPITOL REVIEW

A WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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A Weekly Legislative Report

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WINE COMMISSION LEGISLATION

Legislation is expected to be introduced during the current Idaho legislative session that would remove **\$140,000** in existing annual funding from the **Idaho Wine Commission (IWC)** and redirect it to the **Idaho Hop Commission**. The money comes from a state assessment on strong beer and would be used to promote beer that is produced using Idaho hops.

The IWC for the past three decades has been receiving about \$140,000 each year from the assessment on strong beer. When Idaho began allowing, and assessing, beer above 5% alcohol in 1988, the money was directed to the IWC because there was no significant craft brewing industry in Idaho. But now there are more than **60 breweries** in Idaho. Idaho ranks **second in the nation** in the production of hops, one of the main ingredients used in beer making. A lot of the hops produced in Idaho end up in craft beers.

Unfortunately, losing \$140,000 would have a large negative impact on the IWC ongoing efforts to promote Idaho wine and educate people about the state's thriving wine industry. The IWC has an annual budget of just over \$400,000. The IWC also receives and administers about \$300,000 worth of specialty crop grant funds annually. Those funds are used to promote the state's wine industry within and outside of Idaho. The IWC is funded by a combination of excise wine tax money, grower assessments and money raised during major wine-related events such as *Savor Idaho*, which is held in June and is the Idaho wine industry's premier fundraising and promotion event.

The IWC lost about \$100,000 in funding this year because of the **cancellation of wine events** such as *Savor Idaho* due to COVID-19. The Idaho wine industry has grown from 10 wineries in 1997 to 52. A recent economic impact study commissioned by the IWC showed the **wine industry had a \$210 million economic impact on the state in 2017**. Legislation was proposed during the 2020 Idaho legislative

session that would have taken the wine excise tax funds from the IWC and directed them toward the state's general fund. But lawmakers rejected that idea because they didn't like the idea of starting a precedent of taking money from an agricultural commission and putting it into the general fund.

NEW STATE VET

ISDA Director Celia Gould announced this week that **Dr. Scott Leibsle** would be the new **State Veterinarian** following the retirement of Dr. Bill Barton, DVM. Dr. Leibsle is a graduate from the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine in 2003. Leibsle joined ISDA in 2011 as the Deputy State Veterinarian. Leibsle has played a major role in recent years related to oversight of Idaho's dairy industry, coordination of animal care training for Idaho law enforcement and the development of Idaho's livestock traceability program. Leibsle holds a distinct honor of being only one of 55 veterinarians nationwide to be board certified in equine practice. **Leibsle graduated in Class 38 of Leadership Idaho Agriculture.**

FOOD QUALITY ASSURANCE LAB

On the campus of the College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls is the **Idaho Food Quality Assurance Lab**. The Idaho Food Quality Assurance Laboratory is a pesticide residue laboratory. The lab opened in **October of 1997** under the direction of the Idaho Food Quality Assurance Institute to support Idaho and national agriculture. The Idaho Food Quality Assurance Laboratory's **mission is to support Idaho agriculture**. Through the years the lab has had various owners including the ISDA and the U of I CALS. Guiding the lab from its origin was an Institute Board made up of representatives from agencies and commodity groups in Idaho. The board has played a lesser role in recent years as the administration of the Lab has been under the direction of ISDA. **H50**, continues to carry out the **Red Tape Reduction Act** by eliminating the original board structure since day-to-day activities are managed by ISDA. The

Department plans to organize and host an Idaho Food Quality Assurance Laboratory advisory committee if H50 passes.

[A BEGINNING AND AN END](#)

Senator Jim Guthrie, Inkom, has introduced for a second time legislation (S1032) which would establish **a clear starting and ending date for annual legislative sessions**. Currently in law, the legislative session starts on the Monday nearest the ninth day in January. However, there has not been an established target date to end and sometimes Idaho has had sessions that last well into the early spring. **In 2003** the legislature set a new record of meeting for **118 days** and then in **2009** the legislature met for **117 days**. The legislature has had several bills floating early in the session that deal with the ability of the legislature to call themselves back into session. Currently, Idaho Code does have a provision and guidelines for special sessions. They are called extraordinary sessions and are called by the Governor for a specific purpose, like the three-day session in August that specifically dealt with liability reform.

[HEMP 101](#)

In recent legislative sessions a number of attempts have been made to move the planting, growing and production of hemp in Idaho forward. Each of these pieces of legislation have ran into a variety of roadblocks. This year, another attempt will be made by the Idaho Farm Bureau and other groups to craft a bill addressing many of the prior concerns. Following the November election, there are a total of 21 new members in the body of 105 legislators. On Thursday, February 4, **Idaho Farm Bureau and Food Producers of Idaho** will host a noon luncheon to explain the history, background and current status of growing hemp for Idaho producers. It is called "Hemp 101." **Braden Jensen**, Idaho Farm Bureau Public Affairs Office will be leading the explanation for the freshman legislators.

[NEW LEGISLATORS](#)

Though just two seats in the Idaho Legislature flipped from one party to the other in last November's election, there are more new legislators around the capitol this January. Statewide, **there are 18 new faces in the legislature** and in addition, 4 former lawmakers returned to the statehouse after absences of at least two years. **Three House members moved across the rotunda** to the Senate. With so many new faces we wanted to start highlighting a few for you each week

Rep. Ben Adams

District 13 (Canyon County)

Born in Jupiter, Florida; raised on the mission field in Kiev, Ukraine and a pastor's son in Emmett, Idaho; home school graduate; currently pursuing undergraduate degree at Boise State University; retired Marine Corps sergeant, served two combat tours in Afghanistan and one Marine expeditionary deployment as part of a battalion landing team; Christian; spouse: Rebecca; children: Dylan and Phoebe.



Senator Peter Riggs

District 3 (Kootenai County)

Born in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; undergraduate degree and M.B.A. from the University of Idaho; former president & CEO of Pita Pit USA, Inc., a restaurant franchise headquartered in Coeur d'Alene; former chief strategy officer of KORE Power, a U.S.-based lithium-ion battery manufacturing company; spouse: Tyree, 11 years; two children.



Rep. Julie Yamamoto

District 10 (Canyon County)

Lifelong Canyon County resident; B.A. and M.A. from The College of Idaho; Ed.D. from the University of Idaho; retired educator and administrator; community service: Love Inc. facilitator, Canyon County branch Assistance League of Boise, and Caldwell Youth master planning committee; spouse: Leland Sasaki.



Rep. James Ruchti

District 29 (Bannock County)

Born and raised in Pocatello, Idaho; graduate of West Point (1993) and the University of Idaho College of Law (2001); partner, Ruchti and Beck Law Offices; U.S. Army military intelligence officer (1993-1998); past president, Idaho Trial Lawyers Association; past member, Law Advisory Committee for the University of Idaho College of Law; spouse: Wendy; children: Spencer and Drew.



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