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“On every question of construction, (let us) carry ourselves back to the time when the Constitution was adopted, recollect the spirit manifested in the debates, and instead of trying what meaning may be squeezed out of the text, or invented against it, conform to the probable one in which it was passed.” – Thomas Jefferson

Farm Bureau and Idaho Recreation Council Oppose National Park Designation

The Idaho Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF), Idaho Recreation Council (IRC), Lost Rivers (Butte County) and other surrounding County Farm Bureaus continue to oppose a national park designation (Designation) for the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve (Craters or Monument).

Farm Bureau has been represented as a single-issue, sole opponent of a Designation. In reality, there are a great many legitimate, significant questions that supporters of the Designation have not addressed and are of great concern to the Idaho Farm Bureau and the Idaho Recreation Council. These are our initial questions.

Designation supporters represent “nothing will change” except the entrance sign. IRC and IFBF know that no one can make this guarantee. Supporters also represent that a Designation will cure many of the economic issues facing the City of Arco and Butte County. Farm Bureau and the IRC ask if a Designation is the only solution that’s been considered. Have the

Idaho or United States’ Departments of Commerce been contacted for suggestions and ideas? Will service-based tourism jobs build the economy and enable individuals to raise a family? What’s the trade-off in higher paying resource jobs- how many will be lost? Have supporters looked to other counties in similar circumstances for ideas, economic development programs, etc.?

National Park Service (NPS) personnel at the Monument and supporters of the Designation say there will be “no change in management.” What does this actually mean? Some landowners and business people seem to think it means their farming operations and businesses will not be affected. Process and procedures within the Designation may or may not change; there’s a very real threat that management of federally managed lands and private property surrounding the park/monument/preserve will.

How can supporters of the Designation ensure no change? No Congress can bind a future Congress, nor can a NPS employee

guarantee what a future NPS employee will do.

What specific benefits are expected from a name change? We do not know. The Monument is listed on the National Park Service website as well as nearly every website an individual would use to plan a trip to or through eastern Idaho. We do know that a lava flow is a hostile and dangerous environment. The extreme summer heat and extreme winter cold at Craters may limit justification of a large tourist infrastructure. If the influx of tourists did occur, would county infrastructure; law enforcement, search and rescue, sewage disposal, sanitation and garbage disposal handle the additional human pressure? Supporters have not addressed these issues.

Designation supporters expect a visitor increase of 30% by naming a national park. This level of visitation occurred about 30 years ago, with no accompanying economic boom. Visits have declined significantly over the last 20 years and are now fairly flat.

It is dangerous to think that farming,

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Designation

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ranching, industrial, recreational and commercial activity surrounding a new park will be unaffected or remain at its current level. Will a Designation create federal reserve water rights for the new park?

IFBF, IRC, and the County Farm Bureaus think there is a distinct possibility that the Designation may backfire and harm agriculture and other area businesses, exacerbating, rather than reversing the county's economic decline.

An opposition letter with these and additional concerns was sent to the House and Senate State Affairs and Resources Committees. Copies of the full letter are available on request.

Compliance with Immigration Law

A bill introduced early this week by Representative Greg Chaney (R-Caldwell) would order local law enforcement officers who arrest a person on a misdemeanor or felony charge to check the person's immigration status and cooperate with federal immigration authorities. The bill also discourages cities from offering sanctuary to illegal immigrants by cutting off sales tax funding. The House State Affairs Committee voted to print the bill (H76), and a full public hearing will be held in the near future. Farm Bureau will be monitoring H76 closely as there is

concern that such an effort would only further accentuate agriculture labor shortage issues throughout the state, while also placing added pressure on local law enforcement resources.

American Farm Bureau Policy 137 states that effective enforcement of all immigration laws and border security is a responsibility of the federal government. However, the policy also states that we support enforcement of immigration laws to deter the employment of unauthorized workers. Idaho Farm Bureau is working with the bill's sponsor in an effort to resolve our concerns.

Minimum Wage Bill Introduced this Week

Rep. Mat Erpelding (D-Boise) introduced H72 this week, a bill that would raise the minimum wage in Idaho from the current \$7.25 per hour to \$8.75 per hour on July 1, 2017, and to \$10.50 on July 1, 2018, and then to \$12.00 per hour on July 1, 2019. There are also upward adjustments to tipped employee compensation schedules. Furthermore, the bill directs the Director of the Department of Commerce, beginning September 30, 2018, and on each succeeding September 30, to calculate and adjust the minimum wage rate to the U.S. Department of Labor's price index.

H72 has been sent to the House Ways and Means Committee, though it is unlikely to receive a hearing. Similar bills have been introduced in the past and have not received hearings. The legislature is unlikely to support H72 because it will directly harm those that it purports to help, namely the working poor, and those

who are just beginning in the job market.

As has been previously stated in other articles about this topic, the surest way for those who earn minimum wage to increase their wages is to become an employee that the business does not want to lose. A person who works at minimum wage for a very long time is either not doing the job as the employer wants it to be done, or is in the wrong field for the skills and talents that they possess. Almost any employer will not pay minimum wage very long to employees who show up to work on time, get the job done correctly and efficiently, and who exceed expectations. This behavior will earn someone a raise much quicker than waiting for the government to mandate a raise in the minimum wage.

An increase in the minimum wage will cause employers to assess their employees closely. Employees whose labor is not worth what the employer must now pay under the

new higher wage rate will likely be let go. Furthermore, any minimum wage is always worse than no minimum wage because it makes it illegal to hire anyone below a certain wage. This directly harms those with no experience. In the absence of a minimum wage, a beginning worker could work for an employer at a mutually agreeable low wage while they gain experience. As their abilities increase, they would earn raises in wages proportionate with their expanded skills and productivity, so the employer will not lose them. If their employer does not pay them what their skills are worth, other employers will recognize that they can bid them away from the employer who is not paying enough to retain their skills. A minimum wage prevents many inexperienced workers from even getting a job.

Idaho Farm Bureau policy # 109 states that we oppose any effort to raise the minimum wage. **IFBF opposes H72**

Heavy Truck Rules Approved

On Wednesday, the Senate Transportation Committee approved the Idaho Transportation Department's (ITD) rules allowing 129,000-pound trucks on Idaho's federal highways. The process began in 2015 with Congressman Simpson's rider attached to the 2016 Federal appropriations bill. Senate

Transportation's adoption of the rule on Wednesday moved events one step closer to completion.

The Idaho Legislature passed enabling legislation in 2016 which allowed the 129K trucks on Federal highways in Idaho. Any currently permitted 129K operators were allowed to continue

operating. ITD was instructed to promulgate rules. The rules addressed all trucks in excess of 80,000 pounds GVW operating on "overlegal" permits, of which the 129K trucks were the heaviest class.

Idaho Farm Bureau (IFB) participated

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in the rulemaking that began in May 2016 and addressed driver qualifications, vehicle configuration, safety inspections, statewide permitting, equipment and permit revocations. Of particular interest to Idaho Farm Bureau were the rules addressing safety inspections and equipment. Both rules addressed tractor and trailer brake systems.

Farm Bureau, Idaho Grain Producers, and other stakeholders' comments said mixed brake systems, e.g. a combination of antilock brake systems (ABS) and standard brakes should be allowed between the truck and trailer if the equipment meets the Federal Motor Carrier Act Safety Standard of

the equipment's year of manufacture. Language similar to this was ultimately adopted in the rules.

For example, ABS brakes are required on trucks manufactured since the late to mid-1990s. However, this same truck may pull an older trailer with a standard brake system. Many smaller commodity trucking companies use these mixed combinations; which are perfectly safe and remain legal. (Retrofitting trailers to add ABS is expensive and can cost about \$2,500 per axle.) Repairs and retrofits may upgrade equipment, and by the new rules, must meet the safety standards of the year of equipment manufacture. The 129K pound tractors and trailers are of

late manufacture and have an adequate number of axles and brakes to handle the heavier load and are specifically equipped for 129K pound loads.

So what does all this mean? Permitting for trucks over 80,000 pounds GVW remains the same. In Idaho, 1290K trucks were added as the heaviest class allowed. A separate Federal Motor Carrier Safety Act rule adopted by the Idaho State Police requires additional training and license endorsement on licenses of drivers of doubles and triples. Currently, much of that training is already carried out by companies who utilized double and triple trailers since they do not allow inexperienced drivers to haul those loads.

Removing an Obstacle for Free Clinics

On Thursday Rep Clark Kauffman (R-Filer) presented H82 to the House Revenue and Taxation Committee chaired by Rep Gary Collins (R-Nampa). H82 provides a sales tax exemption to community and faith-based free health-care clinics. These clinics primarily provide services to those who are uninsured, have incomes below the poverty line and otherwise would be seeking care at an emergency room, or through a county indigent program.

There are a number of other organizations associated with the health-care field who provide services, such as the Ronald McDonald House, which currently receive the sales tax

exemption, but oddly free health clinics do not. Currently, some of the supplies and equipment purchased by the clinics are sales tax-free, while many others are not. This exemption would help the donations, which keep them going, to stretch further and allow them to provide more services. The fiscal impact was estimated to be \$10,675 per year.

One question that has been asked is whether these free clinics provide abortions. Almost all free clinics in Idaho are faith-based organizations, so they are fundamentally opposed to abortions. According to the representatives of this effort, there are no free clinics in Idaho that provide abortions. These clinics

focus on primary health-care issues as well as dental, mental health and chronic conditions. Most have very limited staffs and depend almost entirely on doctors, nurses and other practitioners who volunteer their time and services to the clinics.

There was no opposition to the bill, and it passed through the committee on a unanimous vote. H82 will now go to the full House for consideration before moving to the Senate. IFBF policy #166 states in part: "We support legislation that permits, promotes and/or assists . . . free clinics funded by local community/faith-based organizations." **IFBF supports H82.**

How to Contact Legislators

Website	www.legislature.idaho.gov
Legislative Information Center.....	208-332-1000
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