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"It will be of little avail to the people, that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood; if they be repealed or revised before they are promulgated, or undergo such incessant changes that no man, who knows what the law is to-day, can guess what it will be to-morrow. Law is defined to be a rule of action; but how can that be a rule, which is little known, and less fixed?"

James Madison, Federalist Paper #62

Senate Resources Committee Kills Federal Lands Bill

This week the Senate Resources and Environment Committee killed H265a on a vote of 5-4. H265a would have simply allowed Idaho to enter into a compact to work with other western states in an effort to secure the transfer of federally controlled public lands to the states. The purpose of the compact is to have a greater influence on Congress by working cooperatively with other states to share data and develop unified political and legal strategies to motivate the federal government to transfer the land.

The sponsor, Rep Terry Gestrin (R-Donnelly) was repeatedly questioned about whether the compact would obligate Idaho to pay for legal fees that other states incurred and how Idaho would be able to withdraw from the compact. The language in the compact is model language from other states that have adopted the compact. Much of the language is **very similar, if not exactly the same** as the language in a number of the more than 20 other compacts of which Idaho is already a member. None of those compacts have had any of the imagined difficulties that committee members raised. Still, Senate Committee members did not like some of the language contained in the compact.

This did not dissuade five of the committee members. Although the sponsor admitted that the model language may not be perfect and offered to amend the bill to address the concerns raised about the language, Senator Dean Cameron (R-Rupert) and Senator Jeff Siddoway (R-Terretton) both joined Senators Roy Lacey (D-Pocatello) and Michelle Stennett (D-Ketchum) in debating against the bill. Senators Sheryl Nuxoll (R-Cottonwood), Steve Vick (R-Dalton Gardens) and Bert Brackett (R-Rogerson) all spoke in favor of the bill, and Senator Lee Heider (R-Twin Falls) voted in favor as well. Chairman Steve Bair (R-Blackfoot) broke the tie vote and by voting against sending the bill to the amending order, effectively killed the bill.

Farm Bureau is disappointed that the Senators were not willing to consider amendments to fix the language that was pointed out as the reason they opposed the bill. Securing the transfer of federal lands is an important issue to the members of the Idaho Farm Bureau and to the state of Idaho. This would have been one important step in a long series of efforts that will be required to make progress. Farm Bureau will continue to promote the transfer of federal lands and will work to help Legislators understand the great benefits that would result from Idaho managing the public lands.



Idaho Farm Bureau's Governmental Affairs Report

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Issue 12
April 3, 2015

Sage Grouse Protection Efforts – Public Record Exemption

House Bill 291 enables owners of land to enter into a voluntary conservation agreement without disclosing management plans. Representative Steve Miller (R-Fairfield) and Senator Lee Heider (R-Twin Falls) were the sponsors of this legislation that provides a public record exemption for private property owners who join the conservation efforts through soil conservation districts for all species of sage grouse.

Those who participate in these voluntary agreements will not be required to disclose the number of cattle utilizing the property, operating or financial details. Representative Miller indicated that the goal of this legislation is to minimize concerns and attract more private land owners to open their property to research efforts and become more active in managing habitat for sage grouse.

The bill passed the House 53-14-3 and the Senate 24-11-0.

Idaho Water Resource Board Holds Elections for New Officers – IDWR News Release

The Idaho Water Resource Board elected new officers at the IWRB Meeting. Roger Chase was re-elected as Chairman. Mr. Chase has served as Chairman since January 2013 and previously served as Vice-Chairman for the Idaho Water Resource Board from April 2011 to January 2013 and has been a member of the IWRB since March 2009. Mr. Chase is a former mayor of Pocatello from January 2002 to January 2010, and also served on the Pocatello City Council from 1990 to 1997, acting as Council President in 1996-1997. He served in the Idaho State Legislature from 1997 to 2001, as well as on various boards for civic and church groups.

Jeff Raybould was elected as Vice-Chairman. Mr. Raybould has been a member of the IWRB since April 2011. Mr. Raybould has played an active role in the agricultural industry for over 30 years, both as a farm owner and an industry representative. Mr. Raybould currently serves as Chairman of the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District.

Vince Alberdi was elected as Secretary. Mr. Alberdi has been a member of the IWRB since March 2009. Prior to serving on the Board, Mr. Alberdi had been involved in water management for approximately 25 years, including 16 years as the General Manager of the Twin Falls Canal Company.

The Board also welcomed a new member, Dale Van Stone, of Hope, ID. Mr. Van Stone is an Idaho native with over 50 years of farming experience. Dale is a former County Commissioner who also serves on the Bonner Soil & Water Conservation District Board.

Recharge Completes First Successful Year

The Idaho Department of Water Resources has completed its first full year of working with irrigation districts and canal companies to utilize unlined canals and ditches during the off-use periods to allow water to seep into the aquifer.

Brian Patten, IDWR Planning Bureau Chief has directed this program and has marked the success of the program. IDWR information indicates that approximately 75,239 acre-feet of surface water has been allowed to re-enter the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer during the past year.

Several irrigation districts and canal companies have participated in a program where the IDWR's programs involve paying canal companies for the usage of their systems. Some efforts have also involved drilling wells and injecting surface water or diverted water into basins that provide infiltration back into the aquifer.

The Aberdeen-Springfield Canal Co., Great Feeder Canal Co., Fremont-Madison Irrigation District, Northside Canal Co., American Falls Reservoir District No. 2, Southwest Irrigation District and Twin Falls Canal Co. have participated in the recharge efforts.

Sine Die – Easy to Say, Hard to Get There

Sine Die is the traditional Latin term that is used to end an Idaho legislative session. In Latin it means: *without any future date being designated.*

There is never an elegant way to end an Idaho legislative session (at least I have never witnessed it). Legislators have worked now for 81 days with more days to come. These public servants have worked hard to make Idaho a better place to live, raise children, engage in business and the list goes on and on. The 105 members and staff are growing tired and without doubt are becoming a

little bit irritable. As usual, it seems the willingness to negotiate a solution or arrive at a workable compromise is becoming more and more difficult...even close to impossible, in some cases.

Have you ever been in a situation when you just could not work your way through a difficult problem? But, after taking a break and focusing your attention elsewhere for a short time, the problem that seemed to have no solution, magically becomes much easier to deal with. Well, that will hopefully be the benefit of taking a little extra time away from the Capitol this weekend.

Senate and House leadership have observed their members weariness and have given them an extended weekend and get a bit of well-deserved rest. That strategy perhaps will bring benefits as they make the final push to resolve the remaining issues and prepare to adjourn.

There will always be a number of issues that just cannot be timely resolved. There are many ways to explain that..."the issue simply isn't ripe, it was not supported by the other House, that "narrow minded" Chairman put my bill in his drawer, the bill was assigned to the Ways and Means Committee, sentenced to a slow death, or tragically, the Gentleman on the 2nd floor used his VETO stamp!

When that Latin term is finally used, the rooster will crow the next morning and the sun will still rise. But for now we can all enjoy a nice relaxing weekend.

The legislature will be back in action next Monday looking for a way to say, "Sine Die." In the meantime, Happy Easter!

Transportation Bills Killed or Amended

Drama! Intrigue! Humor! All were components of this week's installment in the ongoing transportation saga. One *important new issue* was added into the mix as well.

Drama! Intrigue! - H311 was heard in the Senate Transportation Committee. It was House Leadership's comprehensive bill which included a fuel tax increase, flat income tax, one-time moneys from the general fund, repealed the Food Tax Credit and removed the sales tax on groceries.

After public testimony and committee discussion, three motions were offered; do pass with no committee recommendation, hold in committee at the call of the chair and do pass. The do pass motion failed for lack of second. Hold in committee at the call of the chair failed on a voice vote. A roll call vote was requested and there was some confusion among the committee as to whether or not the roll call was for the failed hold in committee motion or for the upcoming do pass with no recommendation motion. The chair ruled the request as pertaining to the motion on the floor; do pass with no recommendation. The do pass with no recommendation passed on a roll call vote of 7-2.

There was some speculation as to the future of H311. How would the Senate respond? Later the same afternoon we all found out. The Senate suspended rules, acted on H311 and returned the bill to the Senate Transportation Committee, effectively killing it.

Humor!- H312: If brevity's a virtue, then House Transportation Committee Chairman, Rep. Joe Palmer (R-Meridian), wins last week's and *maybe* the entire session's, prize for "Most Virtuous Legislator." (I know, although Mr. Chairman has been typified in many ways, this particular description has probably never entered the minds of his friends in the lobby corps and legislative colleagues.)

After being introduced to present H312 to the Senate Transportation Committee, the grinning Rep. Palmer said, "House Bill 312- it's all yours." Smiles and chuckles start around the room. When asked by Chairman Brackett if he would stand for questions, Chairman Palmer smiled even wider and said "I think we can take any questions if you have any." No questions from the Committee, but all were smiling or laughing by now.

At this point Chairman Brackett asked Chairman Palmer if he would like to close. Rep. Palmer's eloquent opening speech was equaled or surpassed by his closing, "Good bill, should pass. Thank you." Everyone's laughing at this point and Chairman Palmer is extremely proud of himself. Our thanks to Rep. Palmer for providing some much-needed humor and calming everybody down; at least for that short period of time.

H312 is cosponsored by Chairman Palmer and Rep. Jason Monks (R-Meridian) and increases all registrations for all vehicles by \$15, increases motorcycle registrations by \$6, establishes an additional \$100 fee for hybrid vehicles and an additional \$150 fee for electric cars. At its introduction in the House Transportation Committee, Rep. Palmer stated that he fully expected this bill to be amended in the Senate. His prescience was correct. Various Senate Transportation Committee members thanked Chairman Palmer for bringing the bill and said it was a good start for the maintenance revenue effort. H312 was sent to General Orders for amendment on a 7-2 roll call vote.

Important New Issue: There is some discussion of increasing the premium tax on all auto policies by 0.5 percent; this raises approximately \$18-20 million. **Idaho Farm Bureau opposes raising the premium tax to create revenue for infrastructure maintenance.**