



DISTRICT 27 e-NEWSLETTER – February 10, 2014

The highlight of the week was one of our own being honored with the inaugural “Denton Darrington Annual Lecture on Law and Government” series. As the former Chairman of the Senate Judiciary and Rules Committee, Senator Darrington has contributed greatly to Idaho’s judiciary system. We are honored to have served with him during his service as a State Senator. The lecture is part of a series that the University of Idaho, College of Law sponsors along with the Idaho Supreme Court, the Idaho State Bar and Law Foundation. This series will occur annually to discuss improved administration of our justice system. Over time, speakers will include representatives from all three branches of government. This week we heard from Chief Justice Roger Burdick of the Idaho Supreme Court and three federal judges from the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Also, as mentioned last week, the water curtailment order is the most critical issue to all three of us. We have held several meetings to understand and diligently explore all options to resolve this potential economically devastating action. Let us be clear, we support the prior appropriation doctrine; however, we feel the need to assist in finding solutions to this complex issue.

Speaker Scott Bedke

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As the Speaker of the House, I am often invited to speak to groups and give a legislative update. This week I was invited to speak at the Farm Bureau’s Legislative Forum. I gave an update on the budget process and talked about the education issues facing the state. There were several questions from the audience about the state’s water situation and about the sage grouse issue. There was broad concern about using the sage grouse listing as a means for removing or cutting back livestock grazing on federally managed lands. It goes without saying that I will be in the middle of that issue.

Water, which is always so important for Idaho, has increased priority and urgency this year because of the water call made by the Rangen fish hatchery. I will be spending a good amount of my time in the next few weeks trying to work through the water call situation and how those affected can provide the required mitigation. These are complex questions that will take cooperative effort on the part of all the stakeholder groups to solve the problem in a way that is least disruptive to the state’s economy. To read more about Idaho’s water, click [here](#) and [here](#).

Representative Fred Wood

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On Wednesday, the House Health & Welfare Committee heard proposed legislation sponsored by Rep. John Rusche which would have accepted federal funds to expand Medicaid in Idaho and cover approximately 80,000-100,000 Idahoans who remain below the poverty line.

Through Idaho's new health insurance exchange, those from 100-400% of the poverty level qualify for affordability subsidies to help them purchase private coverage; however, those below 100% of the poverty level are unable to access subsidies and currently rely on taxpayer-funded county and state indigent funds and charitable care provided by hospitals and community health centers. The Milliman Report states that approximately 100 uninsured Idahoans a year will pass away who would have otherwise survived if they had insurance coverage. Accessible and affordable health care is an issue that I am dedicated to and will continue to work toward. To read more about this, click [here](#).

Due to a number of concerns, the committee voted to hold the bill in committee; however, work will continue toward addressing the remaining coverage gap for those Idahoans who clearly need better access to appropriate treatments. We will continue working to give Idahoans the best options possible, so we will be hearing from Health & Welfare Director Dick Armstrong and looking at what other states have done to deal with similar issues.

Senator Dean Cameron

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The Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee heard from a number of public safety agencies including the Judicial Branch, Department of Correction, Juvenile Corrections, Attorney General and Pardons and Parole. Public safety agencies provide some of the most essential services in state government. It is a core responsibility to protect Idahoans through the State Police and our correctional departments, but it is also necessary to preserve our constitutional freedoms and assure our right to a speedy trial by having a strong judiciary. Public safety is the third largest segment of the budget, only behind Education and Public Health.

In March of 2013 a Justice Reinvestment Working Group was established in our state with the support of the Council of State Governments. The members of this group come from various backgrounds; Senator Patti Anne Lodge and Representative Rich Wills serve as co-chairs. The board has so far received positive accolades as it continues to look for ways to improve our correctional system statewide. To see the report, click [here](#). The report indicates that if we implement the recommendations by investing about \$33 million in reform, Idaho will save about \$255 million in prison costs over time. Of particular importance is that by investing \$33 million in improvements and reforms, Idaho will save about \$255 million in prison costs over time. Governor Otter is also in full support of these changes to continue improving the public safety of Idahoans. To see his press release, click [here](#).

With Appreciation

Thank you all for the opportunity to serve our legislative district and state. It is truly a privilege that we greatly appreciate and do not take for granted. Please feel free to share your thoughts, ideas, or suggestions by emailing us or calling our offices. Often the best ideas come from constituents, like you.

Please feel free to share this newsletter with others. If they would like to be added to our mailing list please send us an email.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott".

Scott Bedke
District 27
Idaho State Legislature

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fred".

Fred Wood

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dean".

Dean Cameron