



## **DISTRICT 27 e-NEWSLETTER – March 18, 2014**

This week a number of important bills continue to pass as we move ever closer to adjournment. We keep getting busier as we complete the people's business for this session. The House voted unanimously for S1350 which would create a five-person State Treasurer Investment Advisory Board. Our goal is to be done by Friday, which looks achievable unless some unforeseen circumstance arises.

### **Speaker Scott Bedke**

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I am pleased to have been a leader this session for the 2014 Secondary Agricultural Education Initiative. This Initiative builds upon a statewide program with proven success in graduating workforce ready employees and students who go on to college or technical training programs. The Initiative will expand and improve industry preparedness and provide essential personnel for Idaho's rural and urban employers. Our successful efforts this session will directly benefit agricultural and natural resource education classrooms and students in Burley, Declo, Minico, Oakley and Raft River.

Ag education programs statewide have seen a 20% enrollment growth the last five years but have also experienced 36% teacher turnover rate in the last two years, along with increasing lab and shop costs. This year the legislature made a significant investment in the future of agricultural education by funding a full-time state FFA coordinator and increasing the amount of state funds that each ag education classroom will receive from \$10,260 to \$15,000. This week I will join Governor Otter as he signs the bill into law that authorizes Incentive Grants for programs that voluntarily meet Quality Program Standards. These incentive grants will be up to \$10,000 per instructor to be used at their discretion to directly benefit their students, classroom, lab and/or shop. The legislation also provides for up to a \$25,000 startup grant for school districts that want to offer an ag education program in the future.

This investment from the state for ongoing programs and support for future efforts recognizes the importance of agriculture in Cassia and Minidoka counties. I am pleased that it will

immediately and directly benefit our kids, our schools and our communities. More information is available at [www.idahoagedinitiative.com](http://www.idahoagedinitiative.com).

## Representative Fred Wood

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This week the House of Representatives passed Senate Bill 1352- Behavioral Health Crisis Centers. As I have discussed in previous newsletters, this is an important issue that will benefit both our correctional and health and welfare systems. Our citizens in behavioral health crises should not be incarcerated or treated in emergency departments; rather, it would be more appropriate and beneficial for everyone if they were treated and stabilized in a Crisis Center. These centers specialize in mental health and substance abuse disease processes. Once a patient is stabilized, they would then be referred to a more definitive care program.

Each crisis center would be governed by a board of at least five members, and the Department Health and Welfare will audit performance and function. There would then be an evaluation of the effectiveness and cost efficacy of each crisis center and outline the reporting requirements to the Department of Health and Welfare and the Legislature. Each center would be funded by an appropriation from the Legislature. This bill is very important because it improves the lives of all Idahoans in a more efficient way that will also prevent further misuse of preexisting programs. To read more about support behind this bill, click [here](#). It will now go to the Governor for signature. To see the Bill's language and status, click [here](#).

## Senator Dean Cameron

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This last week the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) finalized the budget. As is customary the concluding appropriation allocates the remaining funds. Although most of it was focused on the current fiscal year FY2014, it is an important piece as it determines what tax dollars are expected to be rolled into the FY2015 budget. As reported earlier, January's revenues were down by nearly \$25 million, however February made up that shortfall. Because of the continued erratic nature of our revenue, the legislature continued with a conservative approach. Based on current projections, mindful that April numbers are the largest most impactful of the year, JFAC allocated money to our reserve funds or "rainy day" accounts. These funds were critical in protecting necessary services of government during the last economic downturn, especially education. They are critical in avoiding both budget cuts and tax increases when the economy fails.

Last week JFAC voted to put an additional \$24 million into the Budget Stabilization Fund (BSF), our main reserve savings account. That brings that account to just over \$159 million. JFAC also allocated an additional \$10 million in the Public Education Stabilization Fund (PESF); and \$2 million to the Higher Education Stabilization Fund (HESF). PESF will now have \$59 million and

HESF \$2.9 million. All of these deposits are contingent on the revenue continuing at the projected performances. Further we expanded the cap by which money is automatically deposited, so that should FY2015 numbers come in better than expected even more will be deposited. Although we are making progress in our reserve accounts we are still significantly behind the \$400 million dollars we had in reserves at the beginning of the last recession. Obviously, \$400 million was not adequate.

As you know, “water” has also been a critical issue this legislative session. In January Gary Spackman, the Director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources, issued a curtailment order on a water call by Rangen, Inc. in Hagerman, ID. As potential mitigation to this call, the Aqua Life property also located in Hagerman and owned by Idaho Parks and Recreation (IDPR) has been considered. In 2001, this land was originally intended to be used in conjunction with the University of Idaho for research. When that didn’t materialize we transferred the property to IDPR but it was never developed. IDPR had considered selling the property as revenue but fortunately that never occurred.

As Speaker Bedke and others looked for solutions it was determined that the water and fish raceways should be transferred to the Idaho Water Resource Board for possible use or trade with water users as they provide mitigation. JFAC was asked to allocate money to IDPR to pay for the lost revenue from the transfer of the water rights. The proceeds will then be used to upgrade the rest of the park. Hopefully once completed this will solve the Rangen call and will also be a benefit to all involved. I was happy to play a role in assisting and obtaining the revenue needed.

## With Appreciation

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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,



Scott Bedke  
District 27  
Idaho State Legislature



Fred Wood



Dean Cameron