



Idaho Public Affairs Digest

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TELEVISED MEETUP: The two lead candidates for the Republican nomination for the 1st District U.S. House seat – Vaughn Ward (left) and Raul Labrador – appear on Idaho Reports, the Idaho Public Television program. (Photo/Idaho Public Television)

Idaho Public Affairs Digest

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This week

With this week, the *Idaho Public Affairs Digest* (and its Washington and Oregon counterparts) goes weekly. In addition to more frequent publication, we'll be adding in more news items.

- [Bonneville revenues down](#)
- [Unemployment rates decline](#)
- [Cash Assistance cutbacks](#)
- [Aho and sociological trespass](#)

 **Indicates: Under-reported stories of special note.**

Politics

The race is on

Primary election day is May 22.


NOTE ON PERCENTAGES Percentages noted below indicate probability of party winning the seat in November (not actual winning percentages), as of this issue (they may change through the campaign season as events unfold). No 100% estimates will be assigned, because upset scenarios – however unlikely – exist until votes are counted; normally, 95% or above indicates a near-lock on the office for this election.

U.S. Senate	R	98%	Incumbent Mike Crapo said he would decline to participate in any primary election campaign debates this year. At the Spokesman-Review, Dave Oliveria commented, “I like U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo and believe he’s doing a decent job representing Idaho. But I won’t vote for him unless he cowboy’s up and meets Claude ‘Skip’ Davis in the televised debate. I’m so dang tired of Republican incumbents acting like entitled royalty by sidestepping these debates. I refuse to vote for anyone who does.”
	D		
U.S. House 1	D	50%	
	R	50%	Rough headlines continue for candidate Vaughn Ward : He was told by the Marines that some of his campaign literature had overstepped the bounds for a reserve officer who is a candidate. And Ward and his wife were reported to be overdue in property tax payments (the overdue amount was \$414.22) for property they own at Cascade. Candidate Raul Labrador received an endorsement from the pro-life group Idaho Chooses Life. On April 25 candidate Michael Chadwick , Post Falls, said that he would end his candidacy in the race. His name still will appear on the May primary ballot.
U.S. House 2	R	98%	
	D		
Governor	R	70%	Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter was hospitalized for two days in April; symptoms were reported as dehydration

and indications of flu. He missed a fundraiser for himself headlined by former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

	D	
Lt. Governor	R	95%
	D	
Secretary of State	R	98%
	D	
Controller	R	85%
	D	
Treasurer	R	98%
	D	
Atty General	R	98%
	D	
Supt Public Instruction	R	85%
	D	

Federal/D.C.

 **BONNEVILLE REVENUES DOWN** The Bonneville Power Administration now [estimates it will likely finish the fiscal year with negative net revenues](#) of approximately \$230 million. This shortfall was reported in BPA's second quarterly review published April 30 and is a direct result of the Northwest's low snowpack. Reduced stream flows have resulted in \$450 million less revenue than BPA anticipated at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Traditionally, BPA's sales of surplus power – power available beyond BPA's commitments to its customers – have represented about a fifth of the agency's revenues. Snowpack is the fuel that typically provides surplus power from the hydro system, and revenues from these sales help keep Northwest electricity rates down.

“This is a bad situation that has just gotten worse,” said BPA Administrator Steve Wright. “We had hoped a wet spring would help snowpack across the Columbia River Basin, but that didn't happen. We are now looking at the fifth lowest runoff since the hydro system has been in existence.”

BPA does not expect to make significant changes in the short term because the agency is dipping into its reserves to cover costs. This depletion of reserves, however,

reduces BPA's ability in the future to handle additional financial risks, such as another below-average water year.

BPA's internal expenses are projected to be at or modestly below start-of-year estimates and hence are not contributing to the problem.

The Northwest is unique in its reliance on hydropower, which in good years provides ample clean, renewable and low-cost electricity. Snowpack, rather than rain, is most critical since the hydropower system has limited storage for water. In an ideal spring, the snow melts gradually so that water is available to power generators at federal dams throughout the summer. This surplus generation can provide upwards of a fifth of BPA's total revenue in an average year. With reduced snowpack, the fuel to power the dams is running low. By April, snowpack building season is pretty much over.

The April forecast from the National Weather Service's Northwest River Forecast Center called for 69 million acre-feet of runoff from January through July as traditionally measured at The Dalles, Ore. The reduced runoff results from a persistent El Niño weather pattern that brought unusually dry conditions to the Northwest this past winter.

BPA has been aware of the El Nino pattern and the likelihood of low runoff.

State Government

TF HIGHWAY WORK SPEEDS UP A Twin Falls Highway 93 near-bypass project originally expected to be completed in 2011 [now is expected to be finished by late this year](#), state Transportation Department officials told the Twin Falls *Times-News*.

The route will allow travelers on U.S. 93 to avoid driving through central Twin Falls, and instead take a route (based at northern Twin Falls on Pole Line Road near the Snake River canyon) that cuts mostly west of town. The route is hoped to relieve some of the congestion on the very busy Blue Lakes Boulevard, which is part of the currently-designated 93.

CAPITAL FOR A DAY OTTER'S HOME TOWN The Ada County community of **Star**, which also happens to be the home community for Idaho's governor, will be Idaho's "Capital for a Day" on **Monday, May 17, 2010**.

The first-come, first-served open opportunity to meet with Governor **C.L. "Butch" Otter**, selected members of his Cabinet and other senior state officials is scheduled from **9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Star City Hall**, located at 10769 W. State Street in Star. The Governor also will join Mayor Nate Mitchell, other state and local leaders, and community members for lunch at noon at Sully's Irish Pub, located at 11123 W. State Street in Star. The public also is welcome to attend the lunch.

Officials joining Governor Otter at Capital for a Day will include **Lieutenant Governor Brad Little**; Superintendent of Public Instruction **Tom Luna**; **Brigadier General Bill Shawver**, director of the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security and

commander of the Idaho Air National Guard; **Celia Gould**, director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture; **Brian Ness**, director of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD); **Don Dietrich**, director of the Idaho Department of Commerce; **Bill Deal**, director of the Idaho Department of Insurance; **Kelly Pearce**, administrator of the Idaho Division of Building Safety; **Dick Armstrong**, director of the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW); **Gary Spackman**, interim director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources; **Nate Fisher**, administrator of the Governor’s Office of Species Conservation; **Bob Barowsky**, Idaho Fish and Game commissioner; **Scott Reinecker**, regional supervisor for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game; **Kathy Opp**, deputy director of the Idaho Department of Lands; **Dave Jones**, ITD district engineer; **Captain Steve Richardson**, Region 3 commander with the Idaho State Police; **Pete Wagner**, regional administrator for the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality; and **Ross Mason**, IDHW regional director.

Otter: “With just a few counties left to visit this go-round, it’s time to give the good folks right here in my hometown a chance to get some ‘face time’. I stop in town for coffee almost every morning, but I don’t bring any Cabinet members with me. This will give residents a chance to get their questions answered personally and directly, and it will give members of my administration a chance to get to know a community that reflects Idaho’s rural heritage while coping with southwestern Idaho’s population growth and all that comes along with it.”

REVENUE UNDER PROJECTION The **Division of Financial Management** issued preliminary, incomplete April tax revenue data today that shows the State took in \$55.5 million less than projected during the past month. The numbers will be complete and “official” on May 15. Governor **C.L. “Butch” Otter** was briefed on the shortfall and [issued the following statement](#):

“Sales tax receipts were up in April. So were receipts from individual income tax withholding. That means more people are earning money and feeling better about their prospects. That’s good news, but it doesn’t make up for other tax receipts remaining well below projections. I have no doubt that our economy is headed in the right direction. However, April’s tax filings largely still reflect what was happening with the economy last year – not over these past few months of marginally improving conditions. There is a lag between private economic activity and its public benefit. We must keep working to create career-path job opportunities for more Idahoans. If we do that, the revenue will come. But for now it’s clearer than ever that we are doing the right thing by remaining prudent and cautious in our approach to using taxpayers’ money. I’m grateful that legislators recognized that and gave me the tools to balance the budget in Fiscal 2010. The Legislature deserves a lot of credit for working with me to ensure Idaho’s State government lives within the people’s means.”

State Regulation

[Published state rules material for May.](#)

Department of Juvenile Corrections – Rules Governing Contract Providers (Docket No. 05-0101-1001) – Temporary and Proposed Rule. “This rulemaking clarifies the obligations of contract providers to notify parents of juveniles in custody of the Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections. Parents of juveniles in state custody are always notified when an incident occurs regarding their child. This rulemaking

clarifies whether the contract providers must make immediate or emergency notification to a parent or whether they can notify the parent in a reasonable, but not immediate, period of time, i.e. within ten (10) days of the incident or occurrence. ”

Fish & Game Commission – Rules Governing Fish (Docket No. 13-0111-0901) - Final Rule

Governor – Hazardous Substance Response Rules (Docket No. 15-1302-0901) - Final Rule. “Pursuant to House Concurrent Resolution 49, Section 100, “Regional Response Teams, Designation, Location, Jurisdiction, Activation, Liability,” Subsection 05, “Liability for Response Costs,” only, as amended under Docket Number 15-1302-0901, is not consistent with legislative intent and has been rejected. In accordance with House Concurrent Resolution No. 49, the following changes are being made to the final rule: “Amendments made under Docket No. 15-1302-0901 in Subsection 100.05 have been rejected and are null, void and of no force and effect. The text of IDAPA 15.13.02, Subsection 100.05 will remain as currently codified. The original text of the proposed rule was published in the October 7, 2009, Idaho Administrative Bulletin, Vol. Volume 09-10, Vol. 1, pages 292 through 303. The pending rule was published in the December 2, 2009, Idaho Administrative Bulletin, Vol. 09-12, page 84. Section 100 of IDAPA 15.13.02 is being reprinted as codified following this notice. Any additional amendments made to this rule under this docket that were not affected by HCR 49 became final and effective upon adoption of HCR 49 and have been codified. ”

Department of Health & Welfare – Rules Governing Quality Assurance for Idaho Clinical Laboratories (Docket No. 16-0206-1001) - Negotiated Rulemaking. “The Department is proposing to rewrite this chapter of rules. Negotiated rulemaking is being conducted by the Department in order to gather input from interested parties regarding certain key elements of this chapter. Since the last major update of these rules in 1987, there have been significant technological changes that render much of the language in this chapter obsolete and outdated. Further, the rules do not reflect more recent changes in federal regulations, in the organizational structure of the Department’s Idaho Bureau of Laboratories, and in IBEs current practices. ”

■ Rules Governing Certification of Idaho Water Quality Laboratories (Docket No. 16-0213-1001) – Negotiated Rulemaking

■ Rules Governing the Temporary Assistance for Families in Idaho (TAFI) (Docket No. 16-0308-1001) – Proposed Rule. “The U.S. Census that is conducted every ten years hires temporary employees to conduct this field work. The Department is excluding this temporary census income from countable income in order to treat income for TAFI the same as other benefit programs. Federal regulations updated the special immigrants length of eligibility and these rules are being amended to align with those updates. The Department is removing barriers that have excluded participation under the Career Enhancement services to help participants obtain or maintain employment. These changes will align with Emergency Assistance services by: removing the requirement to have a job search assistance plan, removing the restriction from CE services for anyone who received emergency assistance payments in the past 12 months, and removing housing and utility costs from prohibited supportive service expenditures. ”

■ Medicaid Enhanced Plan Benefits (Docket No. 16-0310-1001) Temporary and Proposed Rule

■ Rules Governing the Idaho Child Care Program (Docket No. 16-0612-1001) Proposed Rule. “The State of Idaho has received approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to exempt temporary income earned by individuals temporarily working for the Census Bureau on the 2010 Census. The Department is aligning this chapter of rules with other Department rules to exclude the temporary census income from countable income in order to treat income for ICCP the same as other benefit programs. For ICCP participants, the temporary employment income cannot exceed a time period of six months. ”

Department of Insurance – Continuing Education (Docket No. 18-0153-0901) – Final Rule

■ Regulation of Beds, Waters, and Airspace Over Navigable Lakes in the State of Idaho (Docket No. 20-0304-0901) - Final Rule

Department of Lands –Rules Governing Grazing, Farming, Conservation, Noncommercial Recreation, and Communication Site Leases (Docket No. 20-0314-0901) – Final Rule. Changes to comply with rejection by the legislature of previously-adopted rules.

■ Rules Governing Leases on State-Owned Submerged Lands and Formerly Submerged Lands (Docket No. 20-0317-0901) - Final Rule. Changes to comply with rejection by the legislature of previously-adopted rules.

Endowment Fund Investment Board – Rules Governing the Credit Enhancement Program for School Districts (Docket No. 32-0101-1001) Adoption of Temporary Rule

State Tax Commission – Sales Tax Administrative Rules (Docket No. 35-0102-0901) - Final Rule.

Transportation Department – Rules Governing License Plate Provisions (Docket No. 39-0260-0901) - Final Rule

Public Health Districts – Rules of Idaho Public Health District #1 (Docket No. 41-0101-1001) - Final Rule

Local Government

PETROLEUM SPILL [A petroleum spill](#) into the Boise river on May 5 led to efforts by local officials to try to contain it. It was described as a “thin sheen.”

[The Ada County Highway District reported that](#) “Boise Fire Department and Ada County Highway District crews have contained what appeared to be a petroleum substance that was flowing from a storm water outfall along the Boise River near Americana and Shoreline in Boise. The substance in the river was reported to Boise Fire shortly after 12:30 this afternoon. Containment booms and pads on the river soaked up as much of the product as possible. At this point, Boise Fire and ACHD experts believe the amount of petroleum product that leaked into the river was not large. A relatively small amount can cause a visible sheen on the water. A sheen was visible on the water's surface for approximately one mile downstream to the area of N. 36th Street.

ACHD owns and operates most of the storm water system in Ada County and examined nearby storm drain access points in an effort to try prevent the substance from flowing into the river. ACHD was able to locate the substance flowing through the storm drain system at a manhole at Americana and River Street. However, while ACHD was investigating the next storm drain access point in the system, the source of the substance was determined to have stopped, so no removal of material from the storm drain was necessary at that time. An ACHD vacuum truck was ready to remove material in the event that it was still flowing through the system.

Finding the exact source of the substance will be difficult now that it has stopped. There are hundreds of points where it could have entered the system from city streets. The outflow where the substance was going into the river is fed from roadway grates in downtown Boise, the North End, and areas as far north as Hulls Gulch.

ACHD spokesmen said they do not know what the substance was at this point, other than it appears to be petroleum based.

Legal

Decisions

Opinions from Idaho Supreme Court.

- none yet in May.

Business/Economy

Unemployment drops substantially

[A surge in hiring across most of the economy](#) sent Idaho's forecasted seasonally adjusted unemployment rate down three-tenths of a percentage point to 9.1% in April. It was the rate's largest one-month decline since 1983, when the economy was pulling out of another recession.

April was the second straight month Idaho's jobless rate declined, bucking the national rate which jumped two-tenths of a percent to 9.9%. Until March, Idaho's rate had climbed steadily from a record low 2.7% in March 2007 to 9.5 percent this February.

Most sectors of the Idaho economy posted April job gains near or above seasonal levels. The estimated increase of 6,700 lifted total jobs statewide to 602,800. It was the first time the number of Idaho jobs climbed over 600,000 this year and only 4,900 below April 2009, the smallest year-over-year job gap since June 2008.

Only hotels and private education significantly missed the five-year average performance from March to April. Even construction, which has lost over 20,000 jobs since the housing bubble burst in 2007, added more than 1,000 jobs from March to April, an increase approaching 5 percent and the norm for the previous five springs.


The substantial improvement in the job market provided work for the 2,800 people who joined the labor force last month and for over 1,700 of the workers who had been without jobs. It was the 11th straight monthly increase in the labor force, the fourth month in a row that the labor force has exceeded the year-earlier level and the largest one-month increase in total employment – 4,600 – in 16 years.

Employers remained cautious during the month, hiring just 11,400 new workers. While up from March, the total was still below April 2009. But temporary employment agency hiring, a signal of whether employers believe the economy is growing again, was up 3.6% from March and running 8.6% ahead of April 2009.

April marked the second consecutive monthly decline in the number of unemployed, which fell to 69,300. About 46,000 of those jobless workers collected \$12.8 million in unemployment benefits last week. The average weekly benefit is about \$238. Compared to the same week in 2009 the number of claimants was down only about 1.8% as workers exhausted their regular state unemployment benefits and moved to federal extended benefits. Benefit payments were also nearly 7% lower than the same week in 2009 totaling \$294 million for the first four months of 2010.

Job growth was recorded in both rural and urban Idaho. The unemployment rate in the two largest urban areas dropped back into single digits in Boise for the first time this year and in Coeur d'Alene for the first time since last August.

Fifteen of Idaho's 44 counties posted jobless rates in double digits, down from 16 in March. Valley was the highest at 17.6%. Oneida and Clark were the lowest at 5%. In March, three counties had rates over 18%. Five other counties also had rates under 6%.

 **SUNSHINE MINE SOLD TO STERLING Silver Opportunity Partners** in May [was approved by federal bankruptcy court](#) in its bid to buy for \$24.0 million the assets and stock of Sterling Mining Company, the operator of the historic Sunshine Mine. Sterling Mining Company has been reorganizing for the last year under Chapter 11 in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Idaho.

The successful bidder—with a cash price of \$24.0 million—was Silver Opportunity Partners LLC.

Michael Williams, President of Silver Opportunity Partners LLC commented on the successful bid: "Silver Opportunity Partners is very pleased to be the successful bidder for the Sunshine Mine. We not only have great respect for the historic significance of the Sunshine Mine but also share with the community a keen regard for the mine's importance to the economic future of the region. As such we intend to honor the Sunshine Mine's legacy with a strong commitment to its rehabilitation in a manner that is both environmentally sensitive and developmentally sustainable. In that effort, we look forward to working constructively and proactively with the Coeur d'Alene community upon approval of the legal process by the US Bankruptcy Court for the District of Idaho."

The backup bidder was Minco Silver Corporation. Minco is a Canadian silver mining firm, which is a creditor of Sterling Mining Company.

Also participating in the auction was Alberta Star Development Corp., another Canadian firm.

TRACFONE SEEKS FUNDING The Idaho Public Utilities Commission is taking comments through May 18 on an application by TracFone Wireless, Inc., [to be declared an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier](#). ETC designation would qualify TracFone to receive money from federal and state low-income assistance programs. In Idaho, the program is known as “Lifeline.”

TracFone already offers pre-paid wireless service in Idaho, but seeks ETC designation so it can provide service to low-income customers under the name SafeLink Wireless.

Qualifying customers would receive a free handset and up to 67 minutes of free time. For use beyond 67 minutes, customers purchase a pre-paid card at 20 cents per minute. SafeLink will offer service to low-income, low-volume users and transient users who either choose not to enter into long-term service commitments or are unable to meet the credit requirements necessary to obtain service from other carriers.

TracFone does not build facilities of its own, such as cell towers, but enters into re-seller agreements with other wireless carriers to offer services wherever those providers offer service. In Idaho, TracFone obtains services from AT& T Mobility, T-Mobile and Verizon Wireless.

Stocks

Prices trended downward this week almost across the board after several weekly rises.

		This wk	Last wk	Notes
Micron Technology	MU	8.6	9.3	Further steadying of the memory marketplace this week.
Hewlett Packard	HPQ	46.7	52	
Idaho Power	IDA	33.3	36.1	Scrambling to improve Oregon relations on its Boardman-Hemingway power line efforts.
Clearwater Paper	CLW	60	63.7	A strong 1 st quarter profit statement led to some stock improvements.
Qwest	Q	5.1	5.2	

GAS PRICES Price of gasoline in Idaho continued a rise, topping \$3 in some places.

Gas prices (idahogasprices.com)	This week	Last week
---------------------------------	-----------	-----------

low	2.85	2.83
high	3.17	3.17

Environment

DAM RELICENSING MOVES AHEAD The U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on May 6 [approved a three-year extension to advance construction projects](#) at American Falls Reservoir and Little Wood River Ranch. The Federal Energy and Regulatory Commission extensions were sponsored by Senator **Jim Risch**, through the Subcommittee on Water and Power. The extension language was included in S. 3099 and S. 3100, a package of similar relicensing bills.

"Moving this bill out of the Energy Committee is an important step toward keeping Idahoans at work on these projects. It will also result in additional capacity for production of clean, renewable energy," said Risch.

Senator Mike Crapo is a cosponsor of the legislation to extend the projects.

S. 3099, with the American Falls project, and S. 3100, with the Little Wood River project, now move to the Senate floor.

SUPER HUNT RULES CHANGE Idaho Fish and Game [has changed the way it conducts the Super Hunt](#) – starting with the first drawing this year, it will be done electronically. Entries in this year's first Super Hunt and Super Hunt Combo drawing must be received at the Fish and Game headquarters by May 31 with the drawing set for June 15.

The Super Hunt is a fund-raising drawing for 40 big game tags. The tags are handed out to winners in two drawings. Entries are drawn for elk, deer, pronghorn and moose tags. Winners can participate in any open hunt in the state for deer, elk, pronghorn or moose. That includes general hunts and controlled hunts.

Hunters may purchase any number and combination of Super Hunt and Super Hunt Combo entries. The first Super Hunt entry will cost \$6. Each additional entry purchased at the same time will cost \$4 each. The Super Hunt Combo entries work the same way. The first one costs \$20, and each additional entry purchased at the same time will cost \$16.

The first drawing is in June when entries are drawn for eight elk, eight deer, and eight pronghorn hunts as well as one moose hunt. One Super Hunt Combo entry also will be drawn that will entitle the winner to hunts for one each elk, deer, pronghorn, and moose.

The entry period for the second drawing is June 2 through August 11.

The second drawing is in August with two winners for elk, two for deer, two for pronghorn and one for a moose along with another Super Hunt Combo winner.

POCATELLO BLM PLANNING The Bureau of Land Management [has prepared a Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) for the Pocatello Field Office and is announcing its availability.

The planning area covers approximately 613,800 acres of public lands within nine counties in southeastern Idaho. The Pocatello RMP, when completed, will provide management direction for resources and resource uses. Planning issues addressed in the PRMP/FEIS include: Off-highway vehicle management, recreation management, sagebrush ecosystems, public access, and phosphate mining.

The PRMP is essentially the same as the BLM's preferred alternative of the Draft RMP/Draft EIS and provides the most reasonable and practical approach to public lands management in the planning area. The PRMP allows flexibility in adjusting to changing conditions over time while emphasizing a level of protection, restoration, and enhancement to meet the overall needs of the resources, use allocations, and public services into the future.

In addition, the PRMP/FEIS would designate the 400-acre Petticoat Peak Area of Critical Environmental Concern to provide protection to unique native plants. Several decisions associated with the Petticoat Peak ACEC designation include: Designating the area “closed” to off-highway vehicles, excluding rights-of-way and leasing fluid minerals with a “No Surface Occupancy” stipulation. The FEIS also analyzes the direct and indirect effects of fluid minerals leasing with standard terms and conditions and applicable special stipulations.

SNOWPACK % OF NORM is running above normal state.

last	this	basin
81	84	Northern Panhandle
70	75	Spokane
67	73	Clearwater
72	76	Salmon
90	92	Weiser
75	77	Payette
81	82	Boise
75	75	Big Wood
84	82	Little Wood
75	76	Big Lost
80	84	Little Lost, Birch
80	83	Medicine Lodge, Beaver, Camas
66	69	Henry’s Fork, Teton
68	70	Snake above Palisades
75	77	Willow, Blackfoot, Portneuf
69	71	Snake basin above American Falls
88	89	Oakley
89	90	Salmon Falls
90	92	Bruneau
88	87	Owyhee
74	77	Bear River

The percentage represents the total precipitation (beginning October 1) found at selected SNOTEL sites in or near the basin compared to the average value for those sites on this day.

WEATHER Idaho gained some moisture throughout April, but not much. The state still seems, however, to be running well above drought levels.

	04/30/10	05/06/10
Boise	50/38 c	62/42 s
Idaho Falls	43/32 c	52/28 c
Pocatello	45/35 c	53/30 c
Coeur d’Alene	45/37 c	56/38 c
Lewiston	49/43 c	61/44 c
Twin Falls	47/36 c	57/36 s
Sun Valley/Ketchum	45/25 s	48/25 c

s- sunny; c - cloudy; r - rainy; p-snow

Health/Social

Cash assistance cutbacks

In order to meet a \$1.1 million deficit in a cash assistance program, [the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is reducing or eliminating payments](#) to approximately 1,250 Idahoans. The reduction affects approximately 9% of people participating in the Aged, Blind and Disabled program, which pays monthly cash assistance to participants.

“We regret having to take these actions, but we simply do not have the funds to continue the program at the current level,” says Russ Barron, administrator for the Division of Welfare. “We carefully looked at all types of assistance offered by the AABD program to determine what payments could be trimmed to meet our reduced SFY 2011 budget and better align Idaho’s program with other states.”

AABD provides cash assistance to individuals who are 65 or older, blind or have a disability. Eligible individuals receive a certain amount of cash each month to help pay for everyday living expenses. Most Idaho recipients will continue to receive a cash payment of \$53 a month.

Over 14,700 Idahoans receive cash payments through the AABD program, which has grown more than 40% over the last ten years. Compared to other states, Idaho has provided some of the most generous cash assistance benefits, with all of the AABD payments funded by State dollars. Given the current budget situation, the State cannot continue current payment levels to the growing number of AABD participants.

Without this change, the program would grow by a projected \$500,000 of state general funds annually. The program is expected to cost \$9.1 million this fiscal year.

Payment reductions range from \$33 a month to almost \$200 a month. The most significant change is for approximately 300 participants with developmental disabilities who live in certified family homes. Certified family homes are typically homes that provide care for one to two people with disabilities, providing room, board, and help with daily living requirements such as dressing or personal hygiene.

This group will no longer receive \$198 a month in AABD payments, although they will continue to receive their Social Security Income payments of approximately \$674/month as well as medical coverage through Idaho's Medicaid program. All Medicaid benefits will remain the same, which includes a payment of \$1,600 a month to the certified family home provider for helping a resident with daily living requirements.

The proposed changes take effect on July 1. Those affected are being notified by letter in the coming week to give them time to make any necessary arrangements. Many people affected by this change receive other state and federal assistance that will not be affected by the reduction in the AABD program. With reduced State payments, some people may see an increase in their Food Stamp benefits because of their lower income.

IDAHO OPTS OUT OF POOL Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter has notified U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius that [Idaho will not be implementing a new temporary High Risk Pool program](#) under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 – the new federal healthcare reform law.

Idaho is among 15 states that have officially opted out of the federal High Risk Pool program, including Wyoming and Nevada, and Utah's governor has expressed concerns as well. In a letter to Sebelius, Governor Otter wrote, "Put simply, Idaho cannot afford to subsidize a second high-risk pool program, especially during these difficult economic times."

The federal High Risk Pool is aimed at helping uninsured people with pre-existing health conditions obtain coverage, but only until 2014. Estimates prepared by the Idaho Department of Insurance indicate that the \$24 million allocated for Idaho in the federal healthcare reform plan would provide only a month or two of coverage for the approximately 33,400 individuals who may qualify – even though it's a four-year program that will be implemented and administered by the Department of Health and Human Services.

The state's existing, permanent high-risk pool already serves about 1,500 people. Governor Otter said one of his concerns with the federal program is that it would immediately provide coverage at standard rates for individuals with pre-existing conditions, even though individuals with pre-existing conditions who are enrolled in Idaho's high-risk pool pay premiums 25 percent above standard rates. In other words, the federal program's pricing disparity will penalize Idahoans who have been sacrificing and doing the right thing by enrolling in Idaho's high-risk pool, and as a result are ineligible to participate in the federal plan.

"Somebody will have to pay for that subsidy, and it's going to be taxpayers," Governor Otter said. "We continue to question the constitutionality of this law and remain concerned about the cost imposed on the citizens of Idaho. We aren't the only ones who have decided we just can't afford this costly federal mandate."

While the Department of Insurance lacks the additional staff and resources to administer another high-risk pool, Director Bill Deal said the agency still is required by the federal healthcare reform law to research, plan and implement a permanent health insurance exchange intended to help Idahoans and small business owners obtain health coverage.

MEDICAID IDEAS SOUGHT The **Idaho Division of Medicaid** is launching a new website to solicit public input to address a projected \$247 million budget deficit for SFY 2011. The new site, www.MedicaidNeedsYourIdeas.dhw.idaho.gov , provides valuable information on the needed reductions and includes a short survey to gather savings' ideas.

The 2010 Idaho Legislature directed Medicaid to negotiate pricing and service changes with Medicaid providers to meet the budget deficit. Medicaid is using regularly scheduled provider group meetings to solicit providers' input to address reductions in their specific areas of service. Along with these regularly scheduled meetings, Medicaid also has scheduled several video conferences in May to expand public input in the areas of long-term care, developmental disabilities and mental health services.

RIGGINS AT FOUR-DAY The **Riggins School District** [will cut school by one day](#) a week – to a four-day schedule – beginning in the fall, the board there has decided in a 3-0 vote. The four remaining days are, however, expected to be longer.

ANOTHER KNIEVEL JUMP? The Twin Falls *Times-News* [reported on May 8](#) that the son of Evel Knievel, who famously attempted a jump at Twin Falls across the Snake River Canyon in a rocket-powered motorcycle, is considering a re-try of the event next year.

Robbie Knievel indicated he might try the jump on Independence Day weekend in 2011. The original jump was in the summer of 1974.

People

Dyke Nally, head of the state Liquor Division for 15 years since Governor Phil Batt appointed him, said in April [he is retiring](#) from state employment. In all, he worked for state government for 42 years. On an interim basis at least, he will be replaced by **Jeff Anderson**, who leads the Idaho Lottery and will manage both agencies.

Excerpts

Aho and Sociological Trespasses

From an Idaho State University story.

During his 40-year teaching and academic career at Idaho State University, James Aho, emeritus professor of sociology, has penned eight books on a broad spectrum of topics.

It is only fitting then, that since retiring from ISU in December, he has been writing a ninth book, with a working title of “Sociological Trespasses: Interrogating Sin and Flesh.”

“One reason I’ve been looking forward to retiring,” said the 67-year-old professor, “is that it will afford me more time to write.”

The eight books he penned have the following titles: “German Realpolitik and American Sociology” (1975), “Religious Mythology and the Art of War” (1981), “The Politics of Righteousness (1990), “This Thing of Darkness” (1994), “The Things of this World” (1999), “The Orifice As Sacrificial Site” (2002), “Confession and Bookkeeping” (2005), and “Body Matters” (2008) co-authored with his son, Kevin Aho.

James Aho has also authored numerous articles, book chapters, encyclopedia entries and reviews.

He came to Idaho State University during the 1969-70 school year, while earning his doctorate in sociology from Washington State University, and became a full professor in 1982.

“I appreciate the opportunities working at ISU afforded me,” Aho said. “My work style is to work slowly and methodically, deeply and completely. This has been a wonderful, supportive place for me to work.”

His research interest has ranged from comparative religions and warfare, to right-wing extremism in Idaho, to the sociology of suicide in Idaho.

Aho’s work and expertise on hate groups in Idaho in particular, garnered him media attention in the 1990s and early 2000s. He was featured in a number of prominent broadcast interviews, including on the PBS McNeil/Lehrer news program, BBC, Associated Press Radio, National Public Radio, Monitor Public Radio, ZDK (Germany), NHK (Japan), Dutch Public Radio and TV, CNN, plus countless local radio and TV stations. He had interviews published in a wide variety of newspapers, including the Wall Street Journal, New York Times and USA Today, to name only a few.

“I spent a lot of years trying to understand the people who are attracted to violence, but I began to feel like my fascination with violence made me partly responsible for the violence in society,” Aho said. “I think I lost my sociological objectivity, and thought it was time to end my efforts trying to understand it, and move on to other scholarly objectives.”

But scholarly work was only a portion of his job duties at ISU. Aho figures he has taught around 240 classes at the University. His primary areas of teaching have been religion, violence, social phenomenology and the body.

Aho said he's noticed four major changes in the student body. For starters, the university has grown dramatically. In 1970, the fall enrollment was 6,355; in fall 2009 Idaho State University had 15,500 students. The student body has changed from being comprised mostly of males, to featuring a current student body that has more females than males. Overall, students are older and more of them have families. Aho has noticed students are also accruing significantly more debt earning their degrees, which in turn has made students more career orientated and "with less inclination to delve into the liberal arts."

He has received several prominent awards, most recently being honored as 2009 Idaho State University Distinguished Teacher. Other ISU awards include being honored as an ISU Distinguished Researcher in 1993 and a Master Teacher in 2006 and 2009.

External awards he's received include the Gustavus Myers Award for the best study of human rights in North America in 1994 and Pacific Sociological Association Award in 1996. He was nominated for the Edward Hayden Humanities Book Award, American Political Psychology Book Award and the Victor Turner Humanities Book Award.

Though his academic and research interests varied during his career, his love for Pocatello and the surrounding area have remained constant.

"We love this area for its four distinct seasons and its accessibility to outdoor activities, whether backpacking in the summer, or skiing in the winter," Aho said. "And, it has just been a wonderful place for my wife, Margaret, and I to live and raise our sons."

All three of Aho's sons, Ken, Kevin and Kyle, attended Idaho State University for at least part of their academic careers, studying biology, philosophy and music, respectively.

Editorially

TWIN FALLS TIMES NEWS

[On May 4](#), on the 17th amendment: "What's the most crackbrained idea of the 2010 political season? That's easy: Texas Congressman Louie Gohmert's campaign to repeal the Seventeenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. And remarkably, the two leading Republican candidates in Idaho's 1st Congressional District — Vaughn Ward and Raul Labrador — have embraced the idea."

[On May 6](#), supporting the Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act: "The sponsors hope to attach CIEDRA to an omnibus lands bill in the Senate. That was the approach Crapo used last year to get the Owyhee canyonlands wilderness bill through Congress. Let's hope the tactic works again."

Our Take

TAKING THE 17th That Tea Party questionnaire delivered to Idaho candidates, and signed by a number of them, has all sort of peculiar entries. Maybe the most peculiar of all has gotten little attention, but it should for what it says about the real nature of the Tea Party, and the forces behind it.

It came up, though, when the two main candidates for the Republican nomination in Idaho's 1st congressional district, Vaughn Ward and Raul Labrador, appeared on [an Idaho Public Television weekly program](#) in a near-debate. One of the questions (at just past the 13-minute mark) that may have seemed obscure to many voters came from analyst Jim Weatherby, who had noticed that the Tea Party form indicated support for repeal of the 17th amendment, and that both Ward and Labrador had said they supported repeal.

The 17th amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1913, and it changed a procedure in place since the nation's founding. Up to then, U.S. senators had been chosen by state legislators. The amendment, which was enacted as part of the progressive movement, changed that to provide that the voters of each state would do the honors.

The state legislatures idea grew out of the caution that the nation's founders had about placing power directly in the hands of ordinary voters; those voters, remember, were once far more limited (by gender, property ownership and otherwise) than they are now. As the right to vote expanded, so gradually did demands that voters rather than politicians choose their own senators.

Eventually, problems associated with legislative selection made the case ever stronger. In some cases, legislatures deadlocked over choices, and states went without senatorial representation for years. Worse than that were the many cases of bribery and corruption; a seat in the U.S. Senate was something worth bribing and corrupting over. Popular election of senators has hardly been a perfect thing, but it has worked a lot more smoothly than its predecessor approach.

So why would the Tea Party, which likes to present itself as a movement which takes power away from politicians to give it to "the people," be so enamored of this idea that specifically and clearly does the opposite? Ward and Labrador were at best incoherent in delivering sort-of answers, making reference to states rights. "I think it's important that the senators be beholden to the people of Idaho," Labrador responded at one point; but this change would make them directly beholden *not* to the voters but to fellow-politician legislators. Under either plan, senators are chosen within the various states; the question is whether they are beholden to the state's voters or to a majority of the state's legislators. (Ward said that he agreed.) Could it just be a general disapproval of every reform enacted in the United States since the dawn of the 20th century? (If so, there go the initiative, referendum and recall too.)

Maybe more specifically: Who benefits from such an approach?

Presumably, the same people who tended to benefit way back then: Those who have the big bucks to corrupt state legislators with, and to buy Senate seats – which often is exactly what happened in the 19th century.

Good plan, guys, for taking back government for “the people.” You just have to be clearer about *which* people would be getting the government under their control . . .

UPDATE [In his blog](#), Adam Graham refers to the televised exchange on this: “Weatherby called this out as some big problem. In reality, it’s one of those conservative wish list items that Ward and Labrador won’t spend one minute thinking about if elected to Congress. It’s because moments like this that the issue won’t be addressed, because the argument is not given a serious treatment.” There’s a bit of news, actually, in that: Since when is taking away election of senators from the voters and giving it to the legislature a “conservative wish list item”? Can’t recall seeing it in years past; maybe missed it. But if in any event it is now, why is that? What’s the appeal in it for conservatives, even if they (Graham, at least) consider it a long-shot preference?

Calendar

May

- 1 Last day to submit initiative petition signatures to County Clerk. This date is dependent upon when 18 month circulation period started.
 - U.S. House Agriculture subcommittee hearing on the Farm Bill, to be held in Nampa.
- 3 Department of Health & Welfare announces cuts in cash subsidies to recipients, owing to budget cutbacks.
- 4 Idaho Travel Council meeting. Boise.
- 5 Administrative rules bulletin publishes.
- 8 Colleges and universities commencement.
- 11 Last day declaration of intent to be filed by write-in candidates.
- 15 College and university commencement day.
- 17 Star hosts the Capital for a Day.
- 18 State Land Board meeting. Boise.
 - Board of Examiners meeting. Boise.
 - Possible Snake River Basin Adjudication information meeting, status conference.
- 19 Idaho Transportation Board meeting. Pocatello.
 - Fish & Game Commission meeting. Lewiston.
- 20 Board of Education annual retreat, Boise.
- 25 Primary election day.
- 31 Memorial Day. State and federal holiday.

June

- 1 Last day for County Board of Canvassers to meet.
- 2 County Clerk issues certificates of nomination or election to candidates and certifies to Secretary of State.
 - Administrative rules bulletin publishes.
- 11 Idaho Democratic Party convention. Worley. Three days.
 - Secretary of State issues certificates of nomination or election.
- 12 Free fishing day in Idaho.
- 15 Idaho Transportation Board meeting. Boise.
- 16 Board of Education meeting. Idaho Falls.
 - Association of Idaho Cities Annual conference. Idaho Falls.
- 29 Last day for County Clerk to verify initiative petition signatures. This is dependent upon the last day to submit initiative petition signatures to the County Clerk - 60 calendar days from the submission of signatures.

July

- 4 Independent Day. State and federal holiday (though on Sunday). Some offices may close the follow day.
- 7 Administrative rules bulletin publishes.
 - Fish & Game Commission meeting. Kellogg.
- 20 State Land Board meeting. Boise.
 - Board of Examiners meeting. Boise.
 - Possible Snake River Basin Adjudication information meeting, status conference.
- 21 Idaho Transportation Board meeting. Rigby.