

DISTRICT 18 DETAILER

"The Newsletter of Representative Branden J. Durst"

January 23, 2009, Volume 3, Issue 1

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From the desk...

Dear Reader,
I hope you find this newsletter full of useful information. As your elected state legislator, I am fully committed to working for you. I also hope you are able to provide me your input. By doing so, I will be better prepared to serve you and represent your interests in the Idaho State Legislature. If for any reason you have a question, concern or suggestion please let me know.

NEWS BITES

Rep. Durst will co-host legislative forum with Sen. Kate Kelly and Rep. Phylis King on Monday, January 26 at Maple Grove Elementary.

Rep. Durst meets with Trail Wind Elementary PTO to discuss education.

BUDGET CUTS FOCUS IN 2009

The beginning of the 2009 Session took an ominous tone with Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter's State of the State last week.

As has already been widely reported, the Governor has called for major cuts in every department and agency in state government including education, an unprecedented move. Public schools and higher education are currently scrambling for ways to trim budgets in response to the announcement.

While much is unknown about the potential impacts if the cuts are permitted to proceed, school districts and higher education advocates have expressed deep concern.

Representative Branden Durst (D-18A) has also expressed misgivings about cutting public education. He recently stated, "Cutting education, a primary role of government at a time such as this, is unwise. Now is the time to invest in our future not foreclose."

TRANSPORTATION DILEMMA

Transportation funding, a major point of contention in the 2008 session, is back again in 2009.

While nearly all legislators agree the road funding is inadequate, there is disagreement about the timing and methods proposed by Governor Otter.

Many legislators are awaiting additional information from the Federal Government and any funding that may be made available through the forthcoming Federal Stimulus Package.



Representative Branden Durst (D-18A), expressed concerns about the lack of attention given to mass transportation within the proposal. Durst stated, "Without a viable option for funding public transportation, the Governor is missing an opportunity to provide the comprehensive solution that we need."

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The House Education Committee met this week and completed administrative rules review.

Rules are the protocols established by agencies for the implementation of laws. Rules review is an annual duty of the Legislature.

Of note, the Committee voted to approve a modification to the high school graduation requirements. The change involving the science component of the Idaho Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) pushed the requirement of passing the section back from 2012 graduating class to the 2013 graduation class. The change came in response from concern in the education committee about an inability to adequately prepare students for the test.

BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The House Business Committee was a quiet place this week with only one piece being voted on to print. The Committee, which oversees most issues related to banking and insurance will no doubt become a major focus throughout the 2009 Session.

Representative Branden Durst (D-18A), announced he intends to once again introduce a resolution seeking to bring together stakeholders with the purpose of helping small businesses gain affordable access to health insurance. As the Idaho Statesman recently reported, access to health insurance for small businesses is a major issue and resulted in the formation of the Main Street Alliance.

HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE



The House Health and Welfare Committee, a new assignment for Representative Branden Durst (D-18A), is the epicenter of Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter's proposed cuts to services with individuals with disabilities.

The Committee spent the week listening to reports from the Governor's Office as well as Department of Health and Welfare staff about the proposed cuts. In a question posited by Durst, the DHW staff indicated that the proposed cuts would leave about \$130 million of federal funds on table. A vote on the cuts is set for Monday.