

Team 17 Newsletter

March 15, 2012

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Demise of Ethics Reform

A Tale of Two Futures

Youth Athlete Concussion Bill

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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FROM TEAM 17

Team 17

Senator [Elliot Werk](#)

Representative [Sue Chew](#)

Representative [Bill Killen](#)

Office Hours!

Thursday's, 7:00 - 8:30 PM in the Borah High Career Center

Public Forum

Thursday, April 5th, 2012, 7 PM Borah High School Library

We need your expertise.

To help with legislation or community projects call:

Senator Werk

208-658-0388

Rep Killen

208-345-2956

Rep Chew

208-344-0098

To fund our mailings and other service needs [Contribute with a click](#)

[Chew for House](#)

[Werk for Senate](#)

Central

Welcome to our 6th newsletter of the 2012 legislative session. We hope that you find it enlightening. If you would like to contact any of the members of Team 17 please drop us an email at team17@mindspring.com. And please feel free to pass this along to your friends, coworkers, or family.

First we have some sad news. Representative Killen has decided to retire from the legislature and will not seek reelection. Bill has been a strong team member working with the team on forums, office hours, newsletters, community events, door to door work, and much, much more. He will be greatly missed.

Regarding the legislature, we are now hurtling toward the end of the legislative session. The "plan" is to be done by the end of next week. To achieve this, both chambers have been working double and triple shifts to move through the bills on our calendars. Meeting the Friday deadline does not look good given the number of new bills flying back and forth between the chambers.

In addition, the ethics committee (mentioned below) may also slow the process.

We will let you know what happens in our next exciting installment of As the Legislature Turns!

From the Desk of Senator Werk: *The Demise of Meaningful Ethics Reform*

“The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated,” Mark Twain

If only this were true about ethics reform in Idaho. Alas it is not to be.

Last week Republican leaders from the House and Senate declared the work of the bipartisan working group on ethics done, rejected an independent ethics commission citing concerns about the separation of powers, and confirmed that substantial ethics reform will not occur, once again, this year.

I wish that I could say that I am surprised. However, this has been the outcome since my Democratic colleagues and I began pushing ethics reforms in 2005. This year was likely the best shot we had for success with the proliferation of scandals, press coverage, and the work of the bipartisan group.

With the failure of ethics reform the following will continue to be legal in our state:

- Legislators “police” the actions of colleagues - the fox guarding the hen house
- Lobbyists making cash contributions during the legislative session with bills being considered for their customers
- Conflicts of interest disclosed based on the “honor” system
- Well-connected officials quitting on Friday and lobbying the legislature and government agencies on Monday
- Government officials influencing the awarding of a contract only to go to work for the winning bidder the next day
- Cash contributions to elected officials by state contractors (or prospective state contractors) or their employees prior to the awarding of state contracts

The culture of state government now guards and protects insiders. It promotes special deals for special interests. And it fails on almost all levels to police the activities of elected officials. This must change!

I have announced my reelection bid so that I can return and continue the fight for fundamental ethics reform in Idaho. We must do this before Idaho becomes the next Illinois or Louisiana.

Breaking News - Yesterday the chairman of the Senate Resources and Environment committee (Monty Pearce) revealed for the first time that he had a conflict of interest with one piece of oil and gas legislation because he had oil and gas leases on his property. This appears to constitute a breach of Senate rules ([39H](#)) because he has voted on numerous pieces of legislation regarding oil and gas both in committee and in the Senate without disclosure. Today minority leadership requested that the Pro Tem create an ethics committee (3 Democrats and 3 Republicans) and that they investigate the potential ethical breach(es). I’m told that I will be a member of this committee (though I have received no confirmation of this).

To read a more about it you can go to <http://bit.ly/wuWmJx>, <http://bit.ly/w6Yxfq>, <http://bit.ly/yGTtIo>, and <http://bit.ly/wnXeQH>. Stay tuned to the news for more on the story.

I’ll write more about this in the next Team 17 newsletter.

From the Desk of Representative Killen: *A Tale of Two Futures. Dateline March 14, 2012.*

Depending on your political leanings, this may be the best of times, or it may be the worst of times (apologies to Charles Dickens). It all depends on which bill you happen to be voting on and where your ideology leads. In the last few days a close inspection of voting patterns demonstrate that many in the legislature adopt a future outlook based on whether or not it supports a particular bill they favor or, conversely, oppose one they disfavor.

Case in point – this week on the house floor a number of Republicans, speaking in support of a House measure that would prohibit the restoration, of teacher salaries by disconnecting them from laptop purchase (in response to a Senate bill), opined that the state’s economic future was too uncertain, that banking on continuing revenue growth from a slowly recovering economy was simply too risky. They said that until we have more certainty regarding future growth in

state revenue, it would be imprudent and foolish to make such a commitment (about \$33M annually).

Ironically earlier that same day a hearing in the House Revenue and Taxation committee dealt with a bill sponsored by some of the same doom predicting legislators proposing cuts in both corporate and the highest individual income tax rates (the bill – [H563](#) - later passed the House on a 49-20 vote). Proponents ignored suggestions that 1) we were still way behind on the Governor's and many legislator's commitments to restore funding cut from our schools; 2) the uncertainties attendant in the slowly recovering economy made using one-time moneys to fund a permanent tax cut seem grossly overly optimistic (this lesson should have been learned from the 2001 tax cut that lead to deficits and tax increases) and 3) the bill had no provision for rolling back the cuts if revenue could not support them. The response was, you guessed it – oh no, we have every assurance that the recovery is real and on solid ground – that we could take that to the bank. The price tag on this bill – about \$35 M annually.

Apparently, economic forecasting is like beauty, it's whatever is in the eye of the beholder, and whatever supports (or doesn't) the bill or ideology of the moment.

From the Desk of Representative Sue Chew:

Health Care and Education - Young Athlete Concussion Bill

A bill about concussion awareness ([House Bill 632](#)) passed the House earlier this week by a 59-7 vote and is now in the Senate for consideration. The floor sponsors were Representative Mike Moyle and Matt Kaiserman, a former Boise State University football player who suffered a concussion during a game. For the history of the bill, one can think back to 2010 when the State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Idaho High School Activities Association (IHSAA), was directed by [House Bill 676](#) “to develop guidelines and other pertinent information and forms” to educate coaches, athletes, families, and others connected with sports. The bill was sponsored in the House by Democrat Representative Elaine Smith from Pocatello and in the Senate by Democrat Senator Les Bock from Boise. You can access the information by going to www.boardofed.idaho.gov and clicking on Knowconcussion.org.

In 2010 the Boise School District developed a specific plan for high schools called Concussion Management Plan. The plan is available online at <http://bit.ly/yaoW5O>.

This year's [HB 632](#) deleted some of the old bill and inserted a new section saying that the guidelines apply to “any middle school, junior high school and high school in the state participating in or administering an organized athletic league or sport.”. All of the schools mentioned are directed to “develop protocol to be followed for removing such athletes [those with a concussion or head injury] from play.”

The bills were developed to reduce the risk of head injuries in sports and to reduce the possibility of an athlete sustaining a second concussion before the first one has healed. This session's bill had support from the National Football League. Supporters of the bill hope the risk will be reduced in other sports, too, such as high school soccer, and that student athletes will receive the best of care as they participate in sports.

I'm happy to see our Democratic idea picked up by the majority party and (hopefully) heading for success (no pun intended).

Contacting Team 17

Public Forums to Discuss Legislative Issues

The legislative forums that we have held in past years have proven a great way to keep in close contact with the people we represent. Of course we want to keep these lines of communication open and we will hold more forums this year.

Here is the schedule of our remaining forums:

Wrap-Up Forum (We hope!)	Thursday, April 5 th 7:00 - 9:00 PM	Borah High School Library
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Weekly Office Hours

Once again Team 17 will offer the people that we serve the opportunity to meet individually with the Team on a first come - first served basis. Office hours will be every **Thursday** (except forum nights) from **7:00 - 8:30 PM** in the **Career Center** at **Borah High School**.

Our web sites are constantly being updated with the latest information, so visit them often.

WEB SITES

[Senator Elliot Werk](#) – detailed info on the legislative session and Sen. Werk’s activities

[Representative Bill Killen](#) – read Bill’s updates

[Representative Sue Chew](#) – coverage of legislative activities

Other Links

[Fiscal Facts Book](#) (historic information about budgets and good basic budget data – including various account balances)

[2012 Legislative Budget Book](#) (used by the budget committee members)

[2012 Legislative Fiscal Report](#) (details where the budget currently stands)

[2010 Idaho Fiscal Source Book](#) (sources and uses of funds for state agencies)

We want to stress what an honor it is to represent you in the Idaho legislature. We appreciate all of the visits, phone calls, emails, and letters. This input helps us to better represent our community.

Please feel free to contact any one of us at any time at team17@mindspring.com, or by phone at 658-0388 (Sen. Werk) or 344-0098 (Rep. Chew) or 345-2956 (Rep. Killen).