

Team 17 Newsletter

March 31, 2012

In this Issue:

Public Forum April 5th

End of Session Letter

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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FROM TEAM 17

Team 17

Senator [Elliot Werk](#)

Representative [Sue Chew](#)

Representative [Bill Killen](#)

Public Forum

**[This 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

In this week's newsletter we send you our 2012 End of Session letter. The cost to send the letter to over 20,000 homes in the district far exceeds our budget. However, we wanted you to have the opportunity to see what we thought were the high (and low) lights of the 2012 legislative session .

Space constraints in the printed letter mean that not every action, every priority, or every issue is covered. Please drop us a note at team17@mindspring.com if there is something that's important to you that is not included in the letter.

Or better still - come to our **Final Public Forum of the 2012 legislative Session!** Here are the details:

When: Next Thursday, April 5th from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Where: Borah High School Cafeteria (6001 Cassia - just west of Curtis Road)

Why: To discuss the issues that are important to you and to find out the inside story of the 2012 legislative session.

There is plenty of free parking, tasty snacks, and interesting conversation - what more could you want?

Thank you for the honor of representing you in the Idaho Legislature. Your three legislators, known collectively as Team 17 (Senator Werk and Representatives Chew and Killen), have continued our close collaboration to strengthen your voice in the Legislature and work for effective, common sense public policy.

As always, Team 17 represents you with a focus on three key values:

- Fairness and integrity as we stand up for the middle class
- Shared responsibility as we work to improve your quality of life
- Shared accountability as we work for efficient and effective critical service delivery

The 2012 legislative session provided some solid law that we supported. However, the focus of the session was on crafting a framework for the budding oil and gas industry, tax policy, continued ethical lapses and blocked ethics reforms, little focus on job creation, and questionable legislation driven by the new closed primaries. And finally, continued high unemployment and low revenue remain because of poor decisions and a lack of economic vision over the last decade.

Ethics: This year we saw a **parade of ethics scandals** from the tax and timber woes of Rep. Hart, to Sen. McGee's sexual harassment allegation and resignation, to Sen. Pearce's undisclosed potential conflict of interest (oil and gas leases as he pushed through permissive laws for the

industry). Ethics panels are now common - Sen. Werk and Rep. Killen each served on one this year.

With our Democratic colleagues, Team 17 offered **seven ethics reform bills** this session ranging from an **independent ethics commission to personal financial disclosure**. Sen. Werk has been active in ethics reform efforts since 2005 and Rep. Chew co-sponsored a number of these ethics bills. Ethics reform efforts were again blocked by majority party leaders. **Substantial ethics and cultural reform are needed** to restore public trust in state government.

Jobs: Idaho's unemployment and underemployment rate is unacceptably high and once again Team 17 made **JOBS a major priority**. This focus led us and our colleagues to author, co-sponsor, and support a package of job-creation bills called **IJOBS 2.0** – our second Idaho Jobs and Opportunity Blueprint package. Once again, this was the only comprehensive job-creation package in the legislature.

IJOBS 2.0 included bills to favor Idaho companies in government contracts, incentivize agricultural processing, add accountability to corporate tax breaks, reward companies for bringing new businesses to Idaho, improve rural internet service, provide micro-loans for entrepreneurs, and study the feasibility of an Idaho partnership bank. The agricultural processing incentive bill ([H606](#)) passed the House and died in the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee.

We supported the governor's IGEM bill ([H546](#)) creating a small fund to help private/public partnerships transfer technology from our universities. This bill resembles our 2010 tech transfer bill ([S1278](#)); always glad to lend a hand!

Oil/Gas Development and Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking): There's gold (or natural gas) in them thar hills (of southern Idaho)! The discovery of commercial quantities of natural gas in Payette and Washington counties led to a rush to both regulate and enable the industry. While the development of natural gas in Idaho could be very beneficial to our budget, we must adequately regulate development to ensure that the benefits outweigh the environmental and human costs. A balance unfortunately not struck here or in many other states (as witnessed by the fracking debate).

Sen. Werk (a geologist) had a front row seat in the Resources and Environment committee as new rules were developed and five pieces of legislation passed. Overall the regulations enhance some environmental protections but allow the kind of fracking suspected of contaminating wells and property. Sen. Werk's bills to ban cancer causing chemicals in fracking and require consideration of the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens when regulating the industry were defeated. A controversial bill limiting local control while clearing the way for fracking ([H464](#)) passed despite our no votes.

Budget: While our revenue picture improved, critical services remain on life support. As we predicted last year, the majority party underestimated revenue while schools, higher education, and health were compromised. This year, not surprisingly, there was extra money just in time for elections! However, slashing services last year led directly (as we predicted) to more property tax levies, and increased prison populations and taxpayer costs this year.

Public Schools: The cap on charter schools was lifted and we attempted to detach teacher pay from computer purchases. Sen. Werk voted for the anti-bullying bill ([S1358](#)) while Rep. Chew

helped organize an effort to force a vote on the bill in the House. Overall there was minimal activity concerning public schools this year. Everyone seemed to be waiting to see whether the Luna bills (passed last year) will be repealed by the People when they vote in November. Team 17 actively opposed the Luna bills and supports repeal so we can pass reforms that actually enhance student achievement.

Higher Education: This year we were thankful for a reasonable (8.6% general fund) increase in the higher education budget. Over the last three years higher education was cut 26%! Economic data confirm that investing in higher education is the most efficient way to provide rewarding career opportunities and move Idaho's economy into the 21st century.

Health Services: We supported the small restoration in critical health services in [H609](#). In addition, Rep. Chew worked hard to champion efforts by law enforcement and pharmacists to stop meth labs.

Senior Citizen Issues: Team 17 respects the many seniors we represent. We understand that seniors are very concerned about issues that impact their rights and services. This year we opposed another attack on your health care directives ([S1348](#)). In addition, we authored and supported bills to reduce your property taxes ([S1249](#) by Werk and [H584](#)).

Too Much Government: The escalation of the **War on Women** by the majority party continued with bills targeted at women of child-bearing age. [H530](#) and [HJM010](#) sought to deny women the right to decide whether they could obtain health insurance coverage suited to their needs. [S1387](#) went even further by mandating a potentially invasive ultrasound as a precondition to terminating a pregnancy regardless of rape, incest, etc. The party of "small government" continues government expansion **eroding our individual freedoms and liberty**. Your team opposed all of these efforts.

Team 17 Efforts: Together the team helped develop and co-sponsor the IJOB's 2.0 bills. Team efforts on substantial ethics reform included the Lobbyist Restriction Act ([S1235](#)), the Idaho Conflict of Interest Act ([S1238](#)), and the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act ([S1246](#)). Sen. Werk also authored the Idaho Public Official Accountability Act ([S1245](#)) and The Pay to Play Act ([S1244](#)). All of these efforts were blocked by majority leaders. Representative Killen continued his bipartisan effort to level the playing field for local business by collecting sales taxes owed on internet/catalogue sales ([H581](#)). Rep. Chew continued her efforts on pharmacy, prescription drug safety, and efficiencies in public health. Sen. Werk's years-long effort to ban texting while driving finally paid off ([S1252](#) passed as [S1274a](#)) while his bill to require a public hearing on each special interest tax giveaways - [S1248](#) – again didn't get a hearing.

On a very sad note we mark the retirement of Rep. Killen. Bill has been a tireless and effective voice for fairness and common sense in the House. He will be missed by those who served with him and those that he represented so well.

Again we want to stress what an honor it is to represent you in the Idaho legislature. We appreciate all of the visits to our weekly office hours, the attendance at our four public forums, and the thousands of phone calls, emails, and letters. This input helped us to better represent you and our community. For all of this we are grateful.

Please feel free to contact any of us at any time at team17@cablone.net, or by phone at 658-0388 (Sen. Werk) or 344-0098 (Rep. Chew) or 345-2956 (Rep. Killen). We will be hard at work between legislative sessions and welcome your help and counsel.

Thank You

Team 17

Senator Elliot Werk
Representative Sue Chew
Representative Bill Killen

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)

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