

January 2021
State Legislative Report

Greetings and Happy New Year!

As the year is new and our state legislature isn't scheduled to begin until Jan. 11, I struggle a bit with what to report. I have contacted one of my state legislators for ideas for proposed legislation that might be coming up, but I have yet to hear from him. We can expect the usual issues and some unexpected items to come up. The following are what I've gleaned from newspaper articles.

PROPERTY TAXES. There continues to be discussion about providing relief for property owners. Rep. Lauren Necochea will propose that the \$100,000 cap on the homeowner's exemption be removed and that future increases in the exemption be tied to local property values. Some school districts are wanting to collect impact fees on new developments, which would take some of the burden off of current property owners. So far this request has not been well received by the legislators, but it would seem as though this ability would help the property owners in the districts where growth and development are rampant.

CIRCUIT BREAKER. Senator Grant Burgoyne explains that this is a benefit program which steps in and pays property taxes for people in need, and needs some revision.

TAX EXEMPTION. Representative John Gannon has unveiled a bill to reverse a tax exemption enacted in 2008 which was intended to encourage a French nuclear company to build a uranium enrichment facility in eastern Idaho. This didn't happen, but the result of the bill was to give Micron a \$1.3 billion exemption since Micron was only taxed on 25% of its taxable value. Gannon's bill would increase the percentage to 50% of its taxable value.

FUNDING FOR K-12 EDUCATION. Idaho still ranks at the bottom of per pupil expenditures and that does not bode well for the ability of the schools to provide a proper education for our students.

I have concerns, based on comments from certain legislators, that Idaho's universities may be penalized financially for trying to meet the needs of a diversified student body.

Certainly there needs to be continued discussion of financing our state's infrastructure including the improvement of existing roads and bridges.

These issues are the tip of the iceberg, so I encourage you to be vigilante and check the state legislature's website once the session begins. Also, keep in touch with your local representatives and senators and share your concerns and opinions

As far as U.S. Congress goes, until the inauguration of President Biden takes place, there will be little to report. Our two senators and two representatives have been less than forth-coming when questioned about their positions on any of the current issues. Stay tuned!

Stay safe and well!!!

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