

April 13, 2017

As we turn out the lights at the house offices for 2017, I'm encouraged by what I've learned over the past few months and am looking forward to visiting with friends and neighbors about their impressions of the session. In trying to sum up the session here, I do it with the full knowledge that I will be unable to cover all issues and answer all questions. I would encourage anyone wanting additional information to contact me via email, MBlanksma@house.idaho.gov or phone 208-580-4207. I'm always happy to talk and look forward to hearing from you and sharing ideas. With that, my highlights (and lowlights) of the 2017 session.....

During this session, I introduced two pieces of legislation. The most successful piece, house bill 205, set flat recording fees for common documents in an effort to simplify the recording process with the county. I presented the bill through the house committees, the house floor and the germane senate committee. House bill 205 was then signed into law by the Governor on April 4. It was an exciting process for me because it isn't often that a freshman legislator works a bill successfully all the way through to the Governor in their first year of service.

House bill 80, the other legislation I introduced, had a different yet similarly positive outcome. Working in collaboration with Public Health Districts 3 and 4, Owyhee and Elmore County Commissioners and Sen. Brackett, the legislation I presented would have set a fair funding formula for health districts in Idaho code. Districts 3 and 4 currently receive approximately \$2 less per capita than other districts throughout the state. A way to level the field needed to be found. After introduction, the bill was referred to Health and Welfare, one of my committees, and the chairman and I offered to hold the bill in the hope that the districts could come to agreement on their own. Fortunately, they seem to be on the path to fairness and final formula results are due out this summer.

Beyond my personal projects and the hundreds of other bills that were researched and introduced, two major issues stood out. The 2017 legislative session truly came down to tax relief and transportation funding. As a freshman, it was particularly interesting to watch the legislative process of negotiation and deliberation. Ultimately, I do think the legislation sent to the Governor was for the benefit of all Idahoans.

First, the heartbreaker, our failure to provide tax relief for all in an environment of surplus. The house passed multiple tax cut proposals, one of which, the original house bill 67, I co-sponsored. House bill 67 originally cut income tax in an effort to make Idaho's rates more competitive and I was hopeful that with its passage a meaningful tax cut was in the works. Unfortunately, the senate "radiator capped" the bill and amended it into a completely new piece of legislation known as the grocery tax eliminator while retaining the original bill number. I also supported this amended bill. As you probably now know, it was vetoed by the Governor in a controversial manner and is now subject to a lawsuit. Only time will tell if grocery tax relief will indeed become a reality for Idahoans.

Transportation funding legislation achieved much greater success. Both an emergency funding bill and the comprehensive funding plan passed both houses and became law. The emergency funding bill will provide assistance for road damage repair due to the extreme winter weather. The comprehensive funding bill takes a three pronged approach to road funding by authorizing GARVEE bonding, extending the surplus eliminator and allocating 1% of state sales tax receipts

to Idaho roads. Although not a perfect solution, this new funding formula provides great promise for adequate state transportation maintenance.

In the next few weeks and months, I will be scheduling town hall meetings, as well as meeting with local leaders as we look forward to the 2018 session. As I'm sure many noticed this year, things pile up and become unpredictable at the end of session. Priority legislation for our district must be started early for the best chance of success. If you would like to be on the mailing list for these events and a weekly letter, please email me or give me a call. We are also reworking the website meganblanksma.com over the next month to provide a discussion page and a comment form. The process of governing will only be successful with your participation, so please let me know your thoughts and suggestions. I look forward to hearing from many of you over the summer and fall. Thank you again for the trust you put in me to be a voice for District 23 in the Idaho State Legislature.