

House Highlights

By Tom Loertscher

During a legislative session there are a lot of groups that come through the capital to see us do our work. We see a lot of school kids come and most of them are from the Boise Area. For the last two years running we have had a charter school group come from our district and I have had the opportunity to meet with them for a few minutes. It's always good to see someone from home come by and we are able to show them how we work and show them around the House chambers.

They are like sponges soaking up knowledge at a rate that is unbelievable. The questions they ask are remarkable for their age, and they have a real thirst to learn. I had a great time talking with them. A field trip from our area to Boise is a real commitment on the part of the teachers and parents of these kids and will be an experience they will long remember.

Former governor Levitt from Utah spent some time with legislators trying to sell us on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) required health insurance exchanges. Utah adopted these exchanges a few years before the ACA came along, thinking that it would be a good idea. From what I was able to glean from his presentation, the review of their experience is mixed. What the exchanges are supposed to provide is a means for the consumer to have one place to compare plans and purchase what they think is in their best interest and presumably at a better rate than would otherwise be available. I have been receiving a lot of mail on this one and most people are worried about an exchange that the Federal Government will set up if Idaho fails to act.

The question that nags at me a bit is, if there were no threat from the Feds on this matter, what is the benefit to Idaho having an exchange and should we do it if the ACA were not mandating it? And further, how will all of the parties benefit from an exchange, and will it help contain the cost of insurance? So far whenever I have asked the question the

answer has been that we just cannot afford to have the Federal Government run the exchange and if we don't act we will be sorry. There is a lot of homework on this one.

The Potato Commission was in town this last week and each year they report on the work they are doing to promote the Idaho Potato. Because of the commission's sponsorship of the Idaho Potato Bowl that is played in Boise, they are finding now that Idaho is known for two major things; the Idaho Potato and the blue turf at BSU. One other little factoid is that the Idaho Potato now has the healthy heart seal of approval. That is a long way from the scare tactics that have plagued the spud for so many years. So now I guess in addition to vegetables, you can tell your kids, "Eat your potatoes, they're good for you."