

# **Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce**

## **2011 Legislative Position Statement**

*Prepared for the 2011 Idaho Chamber Alliance Legislative Meetings  
By the Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce Legislative Committee*

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### **LOCAL PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS**

#### **1. Addressing the natural gas shortage in Rexburg and all of Eastern Idaho**

Intermountain Gas has capped their secondary natural gas line at Shelley. As a result, Rexburg does not have access to sufficient natural gas to meet its needs. This also affects Idaho Falls and all communities east of Shelley and is hurting economic development. BYU-Idaho has approached Intermountain Gas about converting its heating system to natural gas and has been told that the current lines do not have the capacity. The Rexburg area continues to grow at a remarkable rate, however, its ability to attract large employers with good paying jobs will be limited without access to a sufficient supply of natural gas. The Rexburg Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the city of Rexburg in its work with the Public Utilities Commission, Intermountain Gas, and the Idaho legislature to address the shortage.

#### **2. Support for the Idaho International Dance and Music Festival**

The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce will host the 26<sup>th</sup> annual 2011 Idaho International Dance and Music Festival from July 28<sup>th</sup> through August 6<sup>th</sup> in Rexburg and Burley. As hosts of Idaho's greatest multi-cultural festival, we encourage the state to continue its strong support of

this important event. We appreciate the Department of Commerce's past and current support of the Festival, which not only promotes tourism statewide, but also promotes culture, international brotherhood, understanding and peace.

#### **3. Water – Aquifer Management Issues**

On peak days the City of Rexburg is currently using nearly all of its municipal water rights. Rexburg, Sugar City, and other area municipalities need more water. However, current regulations make it very difficult and costly for area municipalities to obtain additional municipal water rights necessary for growth. The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce believes that the Legislature should ensure that municipalities in Eastern Idaho are able to obtain the water they need.

The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce supports the Comprehensive Aquifer Management Process and encourages the state to continue to fund and support it. We also believe that local municipalities need to be actively involved in the process and encourage them to participate, including assisting with funding as appropriate.



**IDAHO INTERNATIONAL  
DANCE MUSIC FESTIVAL**

## REGIONAL AND STATEWIDE ISSUES

### 1. Water Law: Dams, Flow Augmentation and Endangered Species Issues

The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce believes we should be prepared for renewed efforts by the federal government to assert control over our state's water resources. We continue to oppose flow augmentation by using water from the Upper Snake River Valley system until a sound scientific basis exists for the practice. If required, augmentation should only be approved on a willing buyer/willing seller basis pursuant to state law. We also oppose dam breaching as an overly simplistic and ill-conceived response to a complicated problem, especially in light of recent Biological Opinions. We believe that oceanic environmental factors, predation and over-fishing are posing the greatest threats to Salmon and Steelhead recovery. We also favor recognition of hatchery fish, with identical genetic composition to wild fish, in making determinations concerning listing or de-listing species. We oppose listings based on arbitrary distinctions, such as so-called "Evolutionary Significant Units."

### 2. Legislative Redistricting

The 6 members of the Redistricting Committee will soon be chosen to draft a redistricting plan based on the 2010 census. The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce believes that Eastern Idaho must be appropriately represented on the Redistricting Committee.

### 3. Funding CAES and the Idaho National Laboratory

The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce continues to support the Idaho National Laboratory in general and encourages the Department of Energy to fund the Idaho National Laboratory's research and development missions as well as its cleanup obligation.

### 4. Urban Renewal Districts (URDs)

The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce believes that Urban Renewal Districts are a useful tool that can help local governments encourage growth and renewal. It supports their continued existence and responsible use. The Rexburg Area Chamber recognizes that there is some opposition to the use of URDs and that the Idaho legislature may need to amend the URD statutes to ensure that URDs continue to be viable tools for local governments.

### 5. E-Commerce and Internet Sales Tax: We Support Idaho Taking a Position for a Simple, Fair and Uniform Tax System

The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the State of Idaho in participating in nationwide efforts to adopt a simple and uniform sales tax and use tax system to facilitate adoption of a sales tax on Internet sales ("streamlined sales tax"). We believe that fair and reasonable taxation of e-commerce is necessary to ensure a level playing field for our local businesses.

### 6. Support for Education – ISU and EITC

The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce supports the continued funding of both primary and secondary education. An educated work force is vital to bringing new companies to Eastern Idaho. We believe that we are in a unique situation with the proximity and collaboration between ISU, EITC, and BYU-Idaho. We believe that state investments in education – particularly in health care at ISU and vocational training at EITC – will pay dividends to our businesses and communities by creating a more capable work force and attracting new companies to our area.

### 7. Opposed to Pornography

The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce believes that pornography is a plague that not only destroys families, but it also drains dollars from business owners as employees spend time accessing it at work. Recent medical research has documented the physical and developmental problems which occur from this scourge. We ask the Idaho Legislature to pass proposed Internet filter legislation for libraries which would provide a minimum protection for Idaho children from harmful indecent and obscene materials via the Internet, within the parameters of the First Amendment.

### 8. State Parks and the Tourism Industry

The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce is extremely concerned by the possibility of additional cuts to Eastern Idaho state parks. The Chamber appreciates the current budget challenges and supports efforts to make our state parks more efficient. However, tourism is a vital part of Idaho's economy and the state's third largest industry. Many individuals and business in Fremont, Madison, and surrounding counties depend on tourists visiting the state parks. The Chamber encourages the legislature to avoid any measures that will harm the local tourism industry in the years to come. The Chamber encourages the legislature to avoid anything that could put the existence or ownership of Harriman State Park in doubt or result in costly litigation.

The Rexburg Chamber thanks the following dinner sponsors:  
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**The Rexburg Area Chamber of Commerce  
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