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Department of Administration



P.O. Box 2221, Boise, ID 83701 ~ (208) 389-2879 ~ email@idahopressclub.org

Major General Jack Kane
Chairman, Idaho State Capitol Commission

Dear Major General Kane,

We at the Idaho Press Club would like to draw your attention to serious concerns we have about planning for future press space in the renovation of the Idaho Capitol. Press coverage of the state legislative sessions and other important doings in the state capitol is key to public understanding, awareness of and participation in our unique form of government, and we want to make sure that access for the press – and thereby, for the public for whom we report – is maintained in our newly renovated state capitol.

The Idaho Press Club is a non-profit trade association representing working journalists in Idaho from all media, including newspaper, radio, TV, magazine and more. We've recently been informed that current plans call for only a single press room in the renovated capitol of about 600 square feet, as opposed to what we previously had – a large "bullpen" for out-of-town reporters to share, plus permanent, year-round offices for the Associated Press, the Idaho Statesman and Boise State Radio.

Interest in covering the state Legislature is strong, and we expect it to grow in the future, not shrink. This year, when the Twin Falls Times-News elected initially not to send a correspondent to cover the legislative session, there was a huge outcry from legislators, readers and others, and the paper changed course and sent a reporter. States that have provided less space or less convenient access for the media have seen the media presence in their state capitols shrink, to the detriment of citizens throughout the state who need to be informed about their government.

We've also been informed that the planned future press space would be in the basement. This isn't an issue for those with permanent, year-round offices, but it is for the seasonal press occupants, for this reason: For the reporters who move into the "bullpen" for three months each year to cover the legislative session, there's long been the huge hassle and expense of installing telephone lines, then pulling them out again at the end of three months (not to mention the cumulative impact that those repeated installations and removals have on our beautiful capitol building over time). With today's technology, those reporters could skip all that and simply use their cellular phones – except that

there's no cellular reception in the basement. If we located the seasonal press "bullpen" on any floor other than the basement level, this issue would go away – and the seasonal reporters wouldn't have to continually install and remove phone lines from the capitol building every year.

We'd also like to suggest, as we look down the road to our renovated state capitol, that Idaho consider an open wireless Internet network that the press and public could access. Many states have now done this, which has proven a great convenience to citizens, reporters, lobbyists, and others who visit their state capitols. Such a system could easily be firewalled off from the state system, to avoid any security concerns.

We stand ready to assist in the process of planning for press space in any way we can, and look forward to seeing the results of this historic step our state is taking with its state capitol building. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can provide more input or information; I can be reached by telephone at 336-2854, or via e-mail at bzrussell@gmail.com.

Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Russell".

Betsy Russell, president
Idaho Press Club

CC House Speaker Lawrence Denney, Senate President Pro Tem Robert Geddes, House Assistant Majority Leader Scott Bedke, Senate Assistant Majority Leader Joe Stegner, House Minority Leader Wendy Jaquet, Senate Minority Leader Clint Stennett, Legislative Services Director Jeff Youtz, Idaho Capitol Commission members

**Major General Jack Kane
Chairman, Idaho State Capitol Commission
650 W. State St., Room 100
Boise, ID 83720-0003**

April 24, 2007

Dear Major General Kane,

As lawmakers conclude planning for the Idaho Capitol renovation and expansion, The Associated Press respectfully renews its request for adequate office space for our operations.

The AP is a member-owned, nonprofit cooperative that provides news to 11 daily newspapers, many weekly newspapers and numerous TV stations, radio stations and Web sites in Idaho. Beyond the state, we have a global reach to millions of readers. For news outlets without a full-time legislative reporter in Boise, we're often the sole source of news about state government. Even newspapers and TV stations with such a reporter rely on the AP to enhance their coverage.

Separate office space is required to preserve the independence and impartiality so crucial to the AP's mission. According to existing plans, the media space measures about 600 square feet. That's just a third the size of the existing space dedicated to media. We understand that schematic drawings for basement-level offices are only in the draft stages. The AP requests adequate, separate space so that we may continue our mission of providing fair, unbiased reporting for all news organizations and their readers in Idaho and the world.

Sincerely,

**CC: House Speaker Lawrence Denney, Senate President Pro Tem Robert Geddes,
Senate Assistant Majority Leader Scott Bedke, Senate Assistant Majority Leader Joe Stegner**