

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 05, 2013

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Bair, Vice Chairman Guthrie, Senators Brackett, Tippetts, Rice, Nonini, Patrick, Durst and Buckner-Webb

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:**

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Bair** called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

PRESENTATION: **Chairman Bair** introduced **Brian Whitlock**, Government Affairs, Idaho National Laboratory, who introduced Richard Hess, Biomass Program Technology Manager for the Idaho National Laboratory.

Mr. Hess manages the biomass renewable energy program at the Idaho National Laboratory's (INL) new 91,000-square-foot Energy Systems Complex. Increasing interest in the use of biomass to address climate change issues and improve energy security is on the rise in the United States (U.S.). The INL supports the Department of Energy (DOE) Biomass Program in developing technology for feedstock supply and conversion of biomass to valuable fuels, chemicals, materials and power, and is continually striving to develop new and more efficient ways in producing energy from feedstock.

Mr. Hess explained that the development and use of fractionation and separation helps reduce waste by using the entire plant. Blending processes using multiple products can create super-potent blends. Reusing by-products left from processing can convert ash into other products by the use of special filters. Phosphates and potassium extractions, once processed, can be used in fertilizers. Rare earth metals are now being extracted from the ash and INL is partnering with the DOE and working to develop new ways to use them.

Asked about the possible competition between the food and non-food growers, **Mr. Hess** explained that non-food biomass is more efficient and does not compete with the food market. The energy market cannot pay what the food market can, and biomass crops require more BTU-per-acre efficiency that food crops cannot produce. With changes in the law, more companies are under pressure to become "green" and have been reaching out to INL for help in becoming more energy efficient. New ways are being explored to help their businesses benefit by the use of biomass fuel. Key goals include getting biomass to function like natural gas, and creating an inexpensive green diesel and green jet fuel.

Supporting documents related to the presentation by Mr. Hess have been archived and can be accessed in the office of the Committee Secretary. (See Attachment 4)

PRESENTATION: **Senator Bair** introduced **Brent Omlstead**, of the Idaho Business Coalition for Immigration Reform. **Mr. Omlstead** introduced the two visiting representatives from the Mexican Consulate. He talked about the coalition and how its purpose is to influence public policy on the immigration issues on behalf of Idaho employers.

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform plan proposed by the U.S. Senate recognizes the need to improve the broken immigration system. This plan proposes to modernize and streamline the process, secure the borders, and create a tough and fair legalization program for individuals who are currently here. **Mr. Olmstead** is pleased that Representative Labrador is on the U.S. House working group which should be helpful for Idaho Agriculture's own immigration issues.

Idaho currently uses the H2A Visa for guest workers since there is no year-round Visa currently available. This Visa, requiring extensive paperwork, allows temporary workers a ten-month maximum stay. Employers intending on hiring any new workers must post a notice about using the background checking system, E-verify, which must be used on all new hires, but only after the workers have been hired. This can cause a lag-time in discovering that the worker is not legal to work here, which causes delays for the employer in finding a replacement worker once they are gone and possibly being fined. It is the employer's responsibility to make sure workers are cleared to work here.

Supporting documents related to the presentation by Mr. Olmstead have been archived and can be accessed in the office of the Committee Secretary. (See Attachment 5 and 6)

ADJOURNED: **Chairman Bair** adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

Senator Bair
Chairman

Denise McNeil
Secretary