

Attachment 1  
3/25/15

I Support Making the Idaho Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon aterrimus*) Idaho's State Amphibian.

Written Testimony – Dr. John Cossel Jr. – March 24, 2015

I will make this statement brief to avoid being redundant, and in the interest of time. I will first introduce myself, explain why another State Symbol is warranted, and finish with why we should select the Idaho Giant Salamander.

I am the chairman of the Biology Department at Northwest Nazarene University, I am a herpetologist (I study amphibians and reptiles), and I have conducted research on Idaho Giant Salamanders in collaboration with Idaho Fish and Game biologist Joel Sauder for 10 years. I have been an educator in Idaho since 1991, and I have helped thousands of students gain an appreciation and knowledge of Idaho amphibians. I was born in Nampa, Idaho and have lived in this great state nearly 50 years... raising a family of 3 children that also love the natural beauty of Idaho.

State symbols are an excellent way of making known the special attributes of our state. These features that make Idaho special are taught to our citizens as part of the statewide curriculum. This gives Idaho students knowledge about their state, and for many creative teachers can serve as a context to convey important lessons about social studies, history and science. State symbols are also an easy way to convey attractive features to potential visitors. Although I can see the problem of getting too carried away with the number of State Symbols, I do not think it inappropriate to recognize an amphibian. We have a State bird, fish, mammal, even a vegetable. Recognizing amphibians by selecting one as a State symbol may help educate our citizenry of their declines (worldwide ~33% of amphibian species are threatened with extinction), of their important roles in food webs, and that they make up part of Idaho's unique biodiversity.

The Idaho Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon aterrimus*) is the perfect candidate for an official State Amphibian. First, they are endemic to our region, meaning they are found almost entirely in Idaho and nowhere else in the world! There are other species of Idaho amphibians that are commonly encountered, for example, the Western Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) but most of these species occur widely in other states as well. Second, the Idaho Giant Salamander is common and widely distributed in Idaho, even locally abundant in some streams. Many Idaho citizens could take ownership of this species, as they likely occur in their own county or in one nearby. If we were to select a threatened species as our State Symbol, it might raise awareness and concern. But, it would likely be rare and not many people would be likely to see one in the wild. Although secretive, Idaho Giant Salamanders can be found with a little effort and knowhow. Lastly, this species is found in habitats that many Idahoans hold dear... clear, cold mountain streams and rivers. Many folks may have a sense of satisfaction knowing that this species is likely in the same river or stream in which they are rafting, fishing or camping alongside. In short, this species is an excellent amphibian ambassador for Idaho.

As a biologist, an educator, an avid outdoorsman, a father, and a native citizen of Idaho, I give my full support to the efforts to make the Idaho Giant Salamander our official State Amphibian. I hope you will give your support as well!

Attachment 2  
3/25/15

## Statement of Frank Lundburg in Support of Proposed Legislation

### Designating the Idaho Giant Salamander (*Dicombodon aterrimus*) as the Idaho State Amphibian

My name is Frank Lundburg and I wish to speak in support of proposed legislation to designate the Idaho Giant Salamander (*Dicombodon aterrimus*) as the Idaho State Amphibian. I am self-employed as a wildlife and public policy consultant and have worked with many groups and organizations in Idaho including the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Idaho Wildlife Federation, the University of Idaho and Zoo Boise, to name a few.

For the past eighteen years I have been adjunct instructor for herpetology workshops at Boise State University. The workshops teach and present information to students concerning the natural history of amphibians and reptiles.

I am a past president of the Idaho Herpetological Society and in 1987 was one of the founders of that organization. From 2007 until 2010 I served as secretary and board member of the International Herpetological Symposium, a national organization dedicated to presenting and sharing information concerning the conservation, captive care and breeding of amphibians and reptiles. I have been selected to present educational papers on two occasions to the International Symposium. In 1989 I was privileged to attend the First World Congress of Herpetology held at the University of Kent in Canterbury, United Kingdom.

In support of this proposal I wish to address the following questions:

1. **Why have state symbols?**
2. **Why have a state amphibian?**
3. **Why the Idaho Giant Salamander?**
4. **How does having a state amphibian benefit Idaho?**

**Why have state symbols?** They are a way to promote and enhance understanding of qualities that are unique to the state. Our symbols serve as messengers of what is special to Idaho to other people, states and countries. The mountain bluebird, monarch butterfly, potato, appaloosa horse and Hagerman horse among others all say something special about this place, something that can stimulate people's interest in visiting and learning more.

**Why have a state amphibian?** Amphibians are one piece of the natural heritage of Idaho that makes this state such a wondrous place to live. They have some amazing characteristics, some that could one day help medical research. Salamanders can regenerate lost limbs, some frogs freeze solid in the winter, having no heartbeat, and yet defrost in the spring and hop off. The word amphibian means double life, referring to the fact that they are born in water but often live on land. Idaho Giant Salamanders epitomize the name "amphibian" as they are born and live in water with external gills, yet for reasons we don't quite understand yet, some individuals absorb their gills, grow lungs, and go live on land, only returning to the water to breed. Twenty other states have recognized this uniqueness by including these marvelous creatures in their state symbols.

## Statement of Frank Lundburg, Page 2

**Why the Idaho Giant Salamander?** The Idaho Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon aterrimus*) is unique to Idaho. About 95% of its range is in Idaho, from the Coeur D'Alene National Forest in the north to the Boise National Forest in the south. It only occurs in a very narrow portion of neighboring Montana. It is the only one of Idaho's fourteen amphibian species found mainly in Idaho, all the other species may be found in nearby states and some throughout the entire United States. It is not threatened, endangered or rare. In fact recent research indicates it is more common than originally thought. Additionally the Idaho Giant Salamander (*Dicamptodon aterrimus*) is the largest salamander in Idaho reaching up to 13 inches in length. It is easily recognized because of its size, large head and marbled pattern on its face. It lives in forests and under rocks in streams and may eat insects, mice, shrews, snakes and sometimes other salamanders. Because of its size and uniquely Idaho range, the Idaho Giant Salamander is the perfect candidate for Idaho State Amphibian.

**How does having a state amphibian benefit Idaho?** It says something good about Idaho. It says we care about the things that are unique to our state, to Idaho. It provides us with yet another symbol, another tool, which we can use to promote the benefits of Idaho to others – While it may be safely stated that not everyone cares if there's a state amphibian, many in the country do care and will take note of one unique to Idaho. A few more people will visit the state. A few more scientists will study something in Idaho. School students will have another opportunity to learn more about Idaho. Look at what one student has already learned just by calling our attention to this issue. Future students will not only be stimulated to learn more about amphibians, they will be stimulated to learn more about how our government - how our democracy works by understanding how the Idaho Giant Salamander came to be designated the Idaho State amphibian.

So I support the adoption this proposal simply because doing so makes for good science in recognizing an unique creature, good economics in giving us another tool to promote Idaho, good education for our children – in short designating the Idaho Giant Salamander as the Idaho State Amphibian simply just makes good sense!

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Attachment 3  
3/25/15

March 25, 2015

Dear Senate Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Bill H001 Idaho Giant Salamander as the State Amphibian. My name is Shelley Barrutia and I am a 4th grade teacher at White Pine elementary. I had the honor of having Ilah Hickman in my class 5 years ago.

It was during our class project on Idaho state symbols that she was inspired to propose the Idaho Giant Salamander as the state's official amphibian. Although it started as just an idealist thought, Ilah has researched and spent many hours educating herself and others on the Salamander. She has exemplified the meaning of perseverance as a student and should be recognized with this bill passing.

As an educator, state symbols help connect students in a real and concrete ways to the state they call home. They enjoy knowing them, drawing them, and finding out interesting facts about them. It is one of their first exposures to Idaho History and sets a motivating tone for learning about Idaho. Having the Idaho Giant Salamander as a State Amphibian would continue that enthusiastic learning for fourth graders.

For the students of Idaho, the Idaho Giant Salamander as a State Amphibian would open up a new way to add more science to the curriculum. Learning the facts and qualities of the creature would increase student learning in science. Having a state symbol that they might have seen, known about, or have researched would allow better connections for the student. This is when students learn the most about school content. It would also open the door to more critical reading skills in non-fiction, which has become a key skill for mastery in our schools today.

Much like when other school students inspired pass legislative bodies to recognize the Monarch Butterfly, the Appaloosa, the Huckleberry and the most recent, the Potato (2002), The Idaho Giant Salamander deserves to be recognized and added in 2015.

Esto Perpetua,

Attachment 4  
3/25/15

Midway Elementary School  
623 North 3500 East,  
Menan, ID 83434

January 17, 2015

Dear Legislators,

I am writing concerning the impact Ilah Hickman's bill, proposing the Idaho Giant Salamander become our state amphibian, has had on my class of fourth grade students. These boys and girls, ages ranging from nine to eleven, have taken on the challenge of persuading their state representatives to seriously consider adding this new symbol to the distinguished list they are presently studying.

They have taken courage in the fact that school children were instrumental in bringing to past the adoption of the Appaloosa as Idaho's state horse. Because of this they believe that they may also be instrumental in making great things happen, and are excited to make this first petition to their government.

Ilah's example to other children in our state is one that should be honored and esteemed. As you read my students' letters, you will hear the voices of young, enthusiastic citizens, eager to make a difference in their great state, just as they see Ilah doing. I am not an expert on the Idaho Giant Salamander--Ilah can take care of that. But as a 4th grade teacher, I can tell you that adding symbols such as this one to our state's list reaches to include the many diverse interests our children have. By varying the kinds of symbols we make our own, we point out to those around us, and especially our own youth, what is unusual, distinct, and interesting about Idaho.

I would urge you to support this bill. The children of Idaho have confidence that you will hear their voices.

Thank you,

*Mitzi B. Hull*

Mitzi Bingham Hull  
4th grade teacher