

MINUTES  
JOINT MEETING

**HOUSE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
SENATE RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Monday, April 12, 2021

**TIME:** 1:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** WW02

**MEMBERS:** Chairman Ehardt, Vice Chairman Wisniewski, Representatives Vander Woude, Horman, Scott, Amador, Armstrong, Furniss (Blanchard), Hartgen, Lickley, Young, Adams, Yamamoto, Chew, Necochea, Nash

Chairman Vick, Vice Chairman Johnson, Senators Bair, Heider, Patrick, Guthrie, Burtenshaw, Stennett, Rabe

**ABSENT/  
EXCUSED:** None

**GUESTS:** Tyler Wagstaff, Malheur County Potato Growers; Paul Skeen, Malheur County Onion Growers; Ron Jacobs, Malheur County; Keith Ridlar, AP; Mark Simmons, Mike McCarter, Del Chapel, Andrea Blades, Braden Jensen, Idaho Farm Bureau; Dave Grabarczyk

**Chairman Vick** called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

**Mike McCarter**, President of Move Oregon's Border and Citizens for Greater Idaho presented the idea of moving Oregon's border into Idaho. Mike shared that Move Oregon's Border is not about politics or political parties, but about people battling to preserve their traditional values of faith, family, freedom, independence and to provide for their families. They have voted in four counties as of November 2020, and will be voting in five counties in May. Six additional counties have active petitions running for future elections. Idaho's population would increase by 50% if the suggested borders of Oregon are accepted and would be the 3rd largest geographical state in the United States.

**Mark Simmons**, Oregon Rancher and former Oregon Speaker of the House of Representatives shared the positive benefits of changing Idaho borders. This is a long shot, and there is a legal process that is well defined. It has passed in two counties and five more counties will be voting on it soon. This issue has come up because the vision of the legislature in Oregon does not include rural Oregon. He pointed out that state boundaries have been moved before. Oregon adjusted its state boundary with Washington in 1958, and West Virginia has taken in counties from Virginia. He explained for this to happen with Oregon counties, it would take the people in Idaho to authorize their state government to negotiate an interstate compact with another state. And there would need to be a constitutional amendment in Idaho. Once that is done, it has to be ratified by the United States Congress.

In answer to committee questions, **Mr. Simmons** explained that the purpose of the ballot is to find out how interested counties are in making this change. He agreed that issues like minimum wage difference, public employee retirement, criminal justice systems, and a lot of other details would have to be worked out. But before the discussion can get that in depth, it first has to be determined if the counties have the will and the desire to go through the process and begin these discussions.

**Mr. McCarter** noted that businesses would boom in Oregon with Idaho's policies. It would result in more people working, and more taxes coming in to Idaho. If these counties' resources were managed better under Idaho policies, it would strengthen Idaho. The counties interested make a path to the Oregon coast, which would give Idaho their own port for transporting goods. Mr. McCarter explained that the movement started in December, 2019. It was launched in January 2020, and was shut down by COVID. They had one rally and four hundred people showed up before the shut down. Even during COVID they have been able to get enough signatures to get on nine counties' ballots.

This discussion has been going on since the 1860's, with friction between Portland and Eastern Oregon stemming that far back. Mr. McCarter was not able to answer how much federal land would be in these counties, or how many correctional institutions are in the Greater Idaho areas, but said that he could get those answers. He pointed out that a lot of questions will need to be addressed, and admitted that nothing this large in a change between state boundaries has been proposed in the United States to date. He did point out that rural economies in Oregon and Idaho are very similar.

**Mr. McCarter** explained that currently there has been no conversation with Oregon's legislature or governor. He believes that they are sitting on the sidelines watching to see if this is a legitimate movement. The votes coming up in May will show the seriousness of the discussion. Not every county has to vote positive. The purpose is to send a message that this needs to be addressed. The goal is eighteen full counties and three partial counties. Fifteen counties have or already had petitions going. There are counties that have refused to accept the petition. Mr. McCarter noted that twenty three counties in Illinois have voted to leave. Counties in North Carolina are talking about leaving. A county in Colorado is talking about leaving. This issue is occurring when big cities are controlling the votes in states and are not aware of rural concerns.

Committee members shared concerns that there needs to be a broader conversation reminding urban areas where they get their food from. Our agriculture industry feeds this entire nation, and members hope that this dialogue would emphasize how valuable rural communities are to urban cities.

**Chairman Ehardt** expressed appreciation for starting this conversation in Idaho, and hopes that legislators would reach out to Citizen's for Greater Idaho if they had more questions. **Chairman Vick** thanked presenters for starting to answer questions on how this would help Idaho. **Mr. Simmons** thanked the committees for lending credibility to the concerns and the movement.

**ADJOURN:** There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

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Representative Ehardt  
Chair

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Maggie Price  
Secretary