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News > Idaho Politics > Idaho Goes to China

Rocky Barker: Gov. Butch Otter brings the herd into China at a gallop

Rocky Barker - Idaho Statesman
Published: 06/06/10

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Gov. Butch Otter doesn't stroll anywhere in airports.

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The growing delegation of the Idaho trade mission to China straggled behind the 68-year-old chief executive as he rushed from plane to plane, choosing stairs instead of escalators on his 19-hour trip from Idaho to Shanghai Friday and Saturday.

Wearing jeans, a plaid shirt, a huge buckle he won roping calves in the Caldwell Night Rodeo and a white cowboy hat he plans to give away for charity, **Otter** set a fast pace for the more than 25 people on the mission.

A host of Alaska and Delta airline officials helped **Otter** and the delegation through airports in Seattle, Tokyo and Shanghai. The group reached its downtown Shanghai hotel, Le Royal Meridien on People's Square late Saturday night.

Host takes Otter on tour of the World Expo

Otter met Sunday with the China Council for Promotion of International Trade's Raymond Wu. Wu, with the Department of International Relations in Beijing, is Idaho's host for the mission. As host, Wu makes the official invitation to the state to hold the trade mission. He also coordinates meetings between **Otter** and the Idaho companies with Chinese government officials.

Wu hosted **Otter** on a tour of the Chinese Pavilion at the World Expo Sunday. The Chinese Pavilion is the most popular at the World Expo, which attracted more than a half a million people to the park built on both banks of the Huangpu River this weekend.

Work gets done even on only day off

Monday was "free" day for most of the participants, the only one scheduled in the trip, due in part to the long arduous flight and the unavoidable jet lag. But several companies had meetings Sunday including the Idaho State Regional Center, which is seeking to attract Chinese investors through a federal immigrant investor program the center offers them a green card to come to the U.S. if they invest \$10 million and create 10 jobs.

Sima Muroff, of the McCall-based regional center held investor seminars Sunday in both Shanghai and Beijing preparing for state receptions Idaho will host Monday in Shanghai and Friday in Beijing. Those receptions are a critical part of the trade mission where companies and the state honor existing customers, shore up relationships and negotiate new business, said Damien Bard, Department of Commerce administrator for International Business.

At the heart of any trade mission to China is building on what the Chinese call "Guanxi," (guan she). The word translates as connections, or relationships, but its meaning goes beyond those terms. I have had it explained by several people that it means developing a relationship with enough understanding that both parties know the others needs and act themselves to further both of their needs.

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Bard and staff from the Idaho Department of Agriculture also were busy Sunday preparing for the many Monday meetings and the receptions.

"Business never stops in this country," Bard said.

What happens Monday?

There is a full series of business meetings all over Shanghai. **Otter** is scheduled to visit the Shanghai Bright Dairy Corp. and has a series of meetings and a lunch with several local and regional government officials. He will host a reception Monday night in Shanghai.

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