

ONLINE EDITION

South Idaho Press

Print Page

Print Page

WEDNESDAY APRIL 20, 2005 WEDNESDAY APRIL 20, 2005 Last modified: *Thursday, April 14, 2005 4:13 PM CDT*

Kempthorne makes Burley stop to sign bills

By *RENEE WELLS South Idaho Press*

Gov. Dirk Kempthorne built a bridge across the Snake River at Burley Tuesday by signing House Bill 376, which paves the way for Cassia and Minidoka counties to establish the first intermodal commerce authority in Idaho.

Kempthorne signed nine other bills while in town, including three major water laws, a bill that exempts developers of renewable energy projects from paying sales tax on equipment and budget legislation to provide health savings account opportunities for those at high health risk.

The bill that drew most of Tuesday's crowd of about 60 to the Burley Municipal Golf Course, was an amendment to one signed a year ago at the Burley-Heyburn Industrial Park. The last-minute legislation amends certain language in the bill that allows counties to establish intermodal commerce authorities, or land-based port authorities.

The amendment clears the way for the two counties to set up an authority committee, something economic developers in Cassia and Minidoka counties have been working on for months.

"Rep. Scott Bedke is the champion of this bill," Kempthorne said.

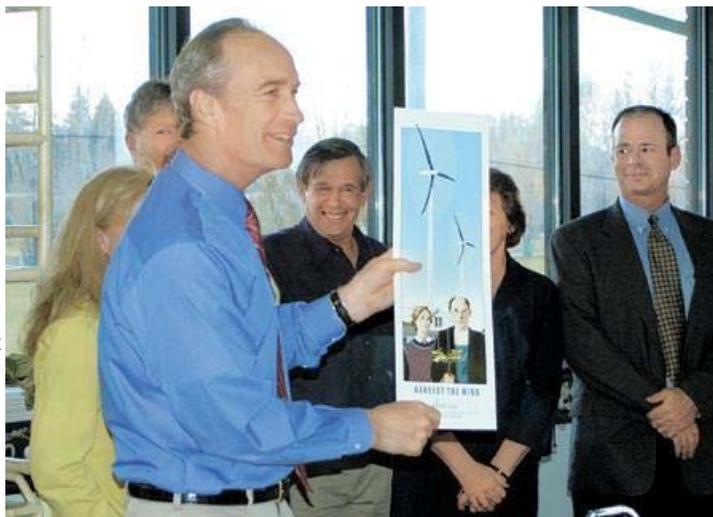
Language in the original bill concerned Idaho's bonding counselors when they met with the organizers of the Mini-Cassia Commerce Authority in March.

Bedke, R-Oakley, vowed to push for legislation to clarify the language and inserted a one-word amendment to the bill during the closing days of the session. With Sen. Dean Cameron's, R-Rupert, help in the senate the bill was approved in the final hours.

Members of the Mini-Cassia Commerce Authority organizational team watched over Kempthorne's shoulder as he signed the bill and applauded when the governor praised the communities for coming together to pioneer what local officials are certain will be a boon to economic development in the region.

Committee Co-Chairman Max Vaughn said he was anxious to bring the concept to county commissioners and the public at Tuesday night's public hearing.

"I haven't heard any negative comments and I hope there will be a good turnout," Vaughn said. "I think



Gov. Dirk Kempthorne gets ready to sign a bill into law which exempts wind power developers from having to pay sales tax on project equipment. The bill was one of 10 signed by Kempthorne at the Burley Municipal Golf Course Tuesday. SIP photo by Laurie Welch

this is going to be a good tool for the counties to help with economic development."

Calling on area legislators to join him at the table, Kempthorne praised the efforts of local delegates who championed the efforts of the interim water committee and pushed for a settlement on water issues that threatened Idaho agriculture.

"This is a historic moment for Idaho with regard to water," Kempthorne said.

The three water bills provide a way for the state to bond on water projects, allow water districts to collect a monitoring fee for mitigation purposes and allow ground water users to set aside land in the Conservation Resource Enhanced Program.

"In the sixth year of a drought, which officials have claimed is the worst in 500 years, we have positioned ourselves to better protect that precious and finite resource better than ever before."

Kempthorne said the Magic Valley legislative delegation was instrumental in bringing the issue to the table and in its settlement.

One of the legislators commented that bills, such as the one to provide sales tax relief for energy developers, are often difficult to pass. But Kempthorne said he drives a vehicle that runs on 85 percent ethanol.

"I would rather use fuel produced in the fields at home than buying from the Middle East and have them dictating to us," Kempthorne said.

Kempthorne also signed bills specific to bingo rules at senior centers and liquor licenses, before heading to Pocatello to sign bills related to methamphetamines use and criminal justice.

Close Window