

IACI 2016 Conference Summary

If you did not attend the 2016 IACI Conference in beautiful Coeur d'Alene last week, you really missed out! Nearly 200 business professionals and legislators were on hand to talk business and policy during the three-day event, as well as enjoy spectacular warm temperatures and great conversation.



The conference kicked off on the terrace, where current Lt. Governor and former IACI Chairman, Brad Little, spoke to the attendees at the welcome reception. His comments set the tone for the next two days, in which policy leaders and economic leaders would work collaboratively to tackle some of the most vexing issues facing the state.

The first full day began early with a local host presentation by Hecla Mining Company President and CEO, Phil Baker, in which he highlighted the 125th Anniversary of the Idaho mining giant. Attendees were impressed by the company's longevity, ambitions and commitment to safety. Hecla Mining is clearly setting the standard with new technology, and soon plans to construct the deepest mine in North America. To see his presentation with some fascinating photos on the history and future of Hecla Mining, [click here](#).



Lisa Klinger, Esq., an ERISA policy expert from The Leavitt Group, gave an overview of the current state of the national health care law (ACA) as it relates to **Medicaid**. The focus was information regarding Idaho and how its employers could face significant penalties due to the state choosing not to expand Medicaid coverage to the "gap" population. Her final handful of slides also presented a wealth of information on what various other states have done to improve their Medicaid systems through "waivers." You can [see the full presentation here](#). The Idaho Legislature will convene an interim committee to review options to consider in the 2017 legislative session. IACI's approach to addressing the issue is contained in its *Guiding Principles for Medicaid Redesign*, [accessible here](#). Additionally, you can reference a 'Close the Gap Idaho' [Fact and FAQ Sheet](#) regarding this critical issue.

Next up was **Bill Kramer, Esq.** of the Council of State Chambers to open a discussion on **tax policy**. Bill's policy expertise in tax was well-received as he [outlined the current state of sales tax collections](#) throughout the nation. One of the main issues the Idaho Legislature will consider addresses "nexus" and how states can use their existing laws to require online sales entities to remit sales taxes for sales made into their states. What is clear is that this issue will be contentious, given Congressional inaction, as well as a lawsuit testing the boundaries of sales tax collection, which is currently working its way through the court system. IACI supported legislation called "enhanced nexus" in the 2016 session, but the bill will need to be reconsidered in 2017.



The final policy discussion was initiated by **Utah Senator Howard Stephenson**, who gave a rousing presentation on both **tax policy and education**. He is the President of the Utah Taxpayers Association, and also serves on the Senate committee addressing state tax policy in the Utah Legislature. The message given was clear that Utah made a huge mistake when it reduced its sales taxes on food. The economics of such a policy has been universally panned as poor tax policy rooted only in populist rhetoric. Real tax policy reforms provide a foundation that encourages businesses—which raise salaries and enhance capital investment—to create more opportunity and prosperity for the overall citizenry. Senator Stephenson's hand-out is [available here](#).

Governor C.L. 'Butch' Otter highlighted the day with a luncheon keynote recognizing the strong partnership between Idaho business and his administration. He regaled Idaho leaders with many positive stories about how businesses have come to Idaho, and recognized a state government that is focused on customer service that results in a benefit for 1.7 million Idaho citizens.





The final morning launched with a discussion panel of Idaho luminaries, including *Speaker Scott Bedke, House Minority Leader John Rusche, Senate Assistant Majority Leader Chuck Winder, House Majority Caucus Chairman John Vander Woude and Senator Janie Ward-Engelking*. They spoke on a wide variety of topics that covered nearly all IACI priorities, including the current education investment plan, transportation infrastructure, health care, taxes and environmental policy. IACI members were asked to play a large role in helping the state to understand how each of these areas impact Idaho business. Notably, IACI was also challenged by members of the panel to come forward with a strategic plan on tax policy for Idaho.

2016 Pat K. Harwood Award

A highlight of each conference are the awards presentations, and this year was no different. **Mark Dunn**, who recently retired from JR Simplot Company, was the recipient of the 2016 Harwood Award — the Idaho business community’s highest honor. Mark began his service on the IACI Board in 2006, and has been a member of its Executive Committee since 2010. As the outgoing Chairman of IACI, Mark Dunn has worked on behalf of business in both state and federal public policy arenas since 1973. He has been a significant force for agriculture and trade policy both domestic and internationally, and served as a trade representative in the Bush administration. Governor Otter commented, “Mark is a man who is truly deserving of this prestigious award.”



2016 Environmental Excellence Award



The **JR Simplot Company’s new Idaho Plant** was the 2016 recipient of the IACI Environmental Excellence Award for demonstrating innovation and commitment beyond mere compliance in environmental work. The new plant has replaced three older facilities and is vastly more efficient and protective of precious Idaho environmental resources that the previous three combined. Accepting the award were John Prigge, Environmental Manager, and Ken Dey, Government Affairs Manager. [Read more about this innovative project](#) in Caldwell!

The IACI Board of Directors then met and reviewed the business of IACI, including establishing the 2017 Priorities, which can be [seen here](#). There was extensive discussion on a variety of issues that will be the focus of IACI's time and resources for the next year. The IACI Board also elected new leadership to guide the Association over the next two years as follows:

- *Tom Harris*, Western States Equipment Co. – Chairman of the Board
- *Scott Madison*, Intermountain Gas Co./MDU – Chairman-Elect
- *Cally Grindstaff*, Clear Springs Foods – Secretary/Treasurer
- *Bob Boeh*, Idaho Forest Group – Vice Chair
- *Jeff Malmen*, Idaho Power Company – Vice Chair
- *Jeff McCray*, McCain Foods – Vice Chair
- *Mike Reynoldson*, Blue Cross of Idaho – Immediate Past-Chair

We believe the conference was a success in renewing important dialogue amongst business leaders and legislators. This is critical for collaboration on good public policies to benefit the state and its citizens in the coming years.

We again thank our many generous employer sponsors whose support made this conference opportunity possible.

◇ ◇ ◇

