

2017 IACI Conference Overview

The recent 2017 IACI Annual Conference in Twin Falls was a resounding success! There were many highlights throughout the event. The attendees received an overview from **Layne Bangerter**, Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Associate Administrator at the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations. He gave a reflective speech on the brief history of the transition of President Trump's administration where he has been front and center from within the EPA. **Governor C. L. "Butch" Otter** spoke on Sunday evening and highlighted the continued economic prowess of Idaho, and also presented **Jeff McCray** of McCain Foods in Burley the *IACI Prosperity Star Award* for his outstanding efforts in bolstering the business community in Idaho.

Lt. Governor Brad Little, a former chairman of IACI, discussed the stage set for the next year both politically and economically. Strategic Guidance Systems President **Pat Bainter** gave an overview of the state of the country related to nationwide political attitudes and how the 2016 national election was won by Republicans. Finally, although the weather was a bit chilly and overcast, attendees also enjoyed a golf tournament, sporting clays tournament, Snake River boat cruise, and zip line adventure after the policy meetings concluded.

Awards



As is traditional, IACI was pleased to present its two achievement awards at the annual luncheon. The *Environmental Excellence Award* was earned by **Clearwater Paper Corp.** for its overall environmental improvement efforts in the key areas of reduction in water usage, waste to landfills and energy use. Read further detail in the [news release here](#).



IACI's highest recognition was the presentation of the *Pat K. Harwood Award* to **Mark Benson**, Vice President, Public Affairs, at Potlatch Corp. Mark was honored for his several decades of service to IACI and the broader business community through his invaluable guidance and support on critical issues. Read more in the [news release here](#).

Innovative Approach to Policy Discussions

Rather than selecting a few specific topics for conference focus, this year's conference featured an innovative approach to policy discussions. IACI worked with the *Boise State University School of Public Service* to conduct a real-time attendee survey based largely on past priorities of the organization. **Dr. Corey Cook**, Dean of the School of Public Service, **Dr. Justin Vaughn**, Co-Director of the Center for Idaho



History and Politics, and **Dr. Jeffrey Lyons**, Assistant Professor of Political Science, collaborated on developing and facilitating the attendee survey. The issues survey was conducted online at the beginning of the conference and was completed anonymously by attendees using BSU-provided iPads.

Survey Analysis

The analysis was based upon 108 completed surveys. Forty-three respondents were legislators, with 30 from the House of Representatives and 13 from the Senate. The remaining 65 surveys were completed by IACI members, with 40 completed by business executives and 25 done by contract lobbyists and/or association executives. The professional focus of this group varied widely. Thirty-seven percent reported taxation/finance as a primary focus area, followed by health care (27%), education (26%), natural resources (22%), commerce/retail (18%), energy (16%), transportation (13%), and judiciary/legal (10%). The diversity of the attendees' backgrounds and areas of expertise provided an excellent base of knowledge and perspective for the survey input.

Strategic Plan and Issues Prioritization

The BSU facilitators gave an overview of the survey results, sharing the areas in which IACI members and legislators were in concert, as well as areas in which they had differing views. The compiled survey data will be the basis for the next several IACI member communications discussing the valuable input received on the various issues.



An important component of IACI's new strategic plan is improving its process for issue prioritization. Ultimately, the work over the next three months will lead to a set of specific priorities that will be achievable and effective for the IACI membership in the coming year. The IACI Board of Directors will use the critical survey input as the foundation for its priority issues decisions in September.

Specific Issue Focus

The first issue IACI will address is **tax and budget policy**. This issue was ranked as one of the top priorities by both Legislative attendees and IACI members. Interestingly, though, the issue also had the highest deviation regarding which areas of tax policy should be the priority. This mirrors the last several Legislative sessions in which the House, Senate and Governor have been unable to find common ground on how best to provide tax relief.

These divergent ideas and approaches have made it challenging for all involved in the public policy process, since clear objectives for tax relief or reforms have not found a unified direction. It also affirms IACI's current efforts to develop a strategic plan for Idaho's overall tax system to ensure economic growth through a stable structure. The intent of the project, which should be completed by IACI's September Board meeting, is to provide a foundation for constructive debate and provide a realistic, defensible and comprehensive tax plan for the state moving forward. Most importantly, it will be a reflection of the vital input of Idaho-invested employers and Idaho citizens to ensure a consistent and competitive structure for the long term.

In conclusion, we offer our sincere appreciation to our excellent presenters and facilitators, generous [conference sponsors](#) and [gift bag sponsors](#), as well as attendee guests and members, without whom this successful event could not have happened. Thank you!

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