



SATURDAY
April 9, 2011

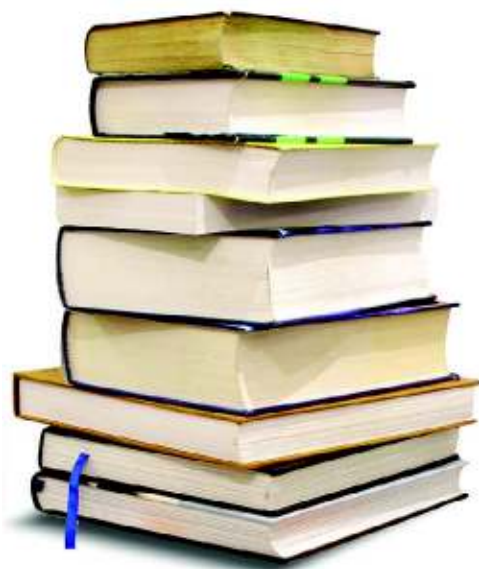
TIMES-NEWS

75 CENTS

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What Idahoans got

Idaho's 2011 Legislature » The session will be marked in the history books as one filled with landmark decisions that will set the state's course for years to come. Here's how lawmakers handled another year of stressed funding and shifting demographics:



Education reform.

Public schools chief Tom Luna's "Students Come First" proposal packed the Capitol's auditorium and got Idahoans talking about the state's education system. The new plan recognizes the role of online learning and technology in classrooms, with the goal of eventually providing laptops for high school students and teachers across the next several years, starting with educators. It also reshapes the teaching profession. Tenure for new educators is eliminated, and students' academic growth will play a strong role in how teachers are evaluated.



Agricultural laws.

Farmers and ranchers got more legal protection from nuisance complaints about their agricultural activities, provided they are following regulations. It comes as residential growth is spreading into once-isolated rural areas. In preparation for anticipated poultry growth, legislators gave the State Department of Agriculture authority to give counties environmental guidance on proposed confined animal-feedlot sites. Lawmakers also put abuse complaints regarding non-production animals in the hands of local law enforcement, not the agriculture department.



Medicaid reform.

Legislators, saying the existing system is unsustainable, overhauled the Medicaid system that serves the health needs of some 220,000 Idahoans. The state ended up with 21 changes with \$34 million worth of state savings. Those include: more provider assessments, fewer hours of provided services and more staff to watch for fraud. Eligibility won't change, and the trims didn't eliminate entire programs. As part of the effort, legislators started long-term planning for an eventual shift to a new system with even more oversight.



Renewable energy.

The state's public lands are now more attractive leasing spots for geothermal developers. New changes give developers longer leases, and the option to lease larger areas of land. The changes have been welcomed by the geothermal industry and officials in Cassia County, which is already home to geothermal development in the Raft River area. On the flip side, lawmakers killed a bill to extend the renewable energy industry's sales tax rebate, which is due to expire July 1. Earlier this year, representatives of the industry called the break integral to operations in the Gem State.

WINNERS

John Q. Public, who can get the first 100 pages of his public records request for free.
Police investigators will get another tool in 2013, when the state starts collecting DNA from all newly convicted felons.
Smokers, who don't have to worry about tobacco taxes increasing.

Story by Ben Botkin / Times-News writer

LOSERS

Independent voters, who will have to declare a party affiliation to vote in primary elections, or be classified as unaffiliated voters. Parties can decide if they will accept ballots from unaffiliated voters.
Gun-loving college students, after lawmakers defeated a bill that would have allowed firearms on public campuses.
The gray wolf, which may end up hunted by law enforcement officers following an emergency declaration by the governor.

IN MONDAY'S TIMES-NEWS: HOW THE LEGISLATURE MOVED FURTHER TO THE RIGHT IN RESPONSE TO THE BALLOT BOX

Deal averts government shutdown

By David Espo
Associated Press writer

WASHINGTON — Perilously close to a government shutdown, President Barack Obama and congressional leaders reached a historic agreement late Friday night to cut about \$38 billion in federal spending and avert the first federal closure in 15 years.

Obama hailed the deal as "the biggest annual spending cut in history." House Speaker John Boehner said that over the next decade it would cut government spending by \$500 billion, and won an ovation from his rank and file — tea party adherents among them.

"This is historic, what we've done," agreed Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., the third man involved in negotiations that ratified a new era of divided government.

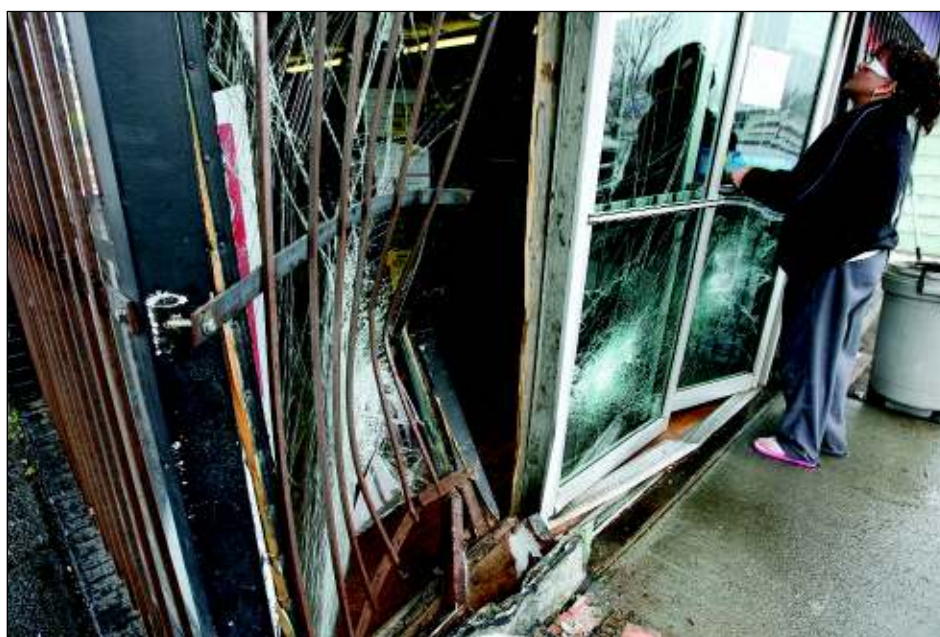
They announced the agreement less than an hour before government

See **SHUTDOWN**, Main 2

COMING SUNDAY: EFFECTS OF A SHUTDOWN

INSIDE
Planned Parenthood, abortion and the budget fight
See **Business 4**

SMASH, NO GRAB



ASHLEY SMITH/Times-News

Marlene Seitz walks through the damaged doors of the Smoke-N-Head shop on Washington Street Friday in Twin Falls. Early Friday morning, an unidentified man broke down the front door with a pickup.

Nothing taken in smoke shop break-in

Times-News

A would-be burglar apparently knew what he was looking for when he broke into a Twin Falls smoke shop early Friday morning.

When he couldn't get to it, he gave up.

Twin Falls police are investigating the attempted burglary of the Smoke-N-Head Shop at 347 Washington St. N.

At approximately 2 a.m.,

an unidentified male attempted to ram a silver Ford pickup with a camper shell into the shop. He was able to gain access and made a line for the store's safe. Finding it locked, he left the building, which sustained extensive damage to its entrance.

"They made it all the way through the front doors, but they didn't take anything," said store manager Spencer Christensen. "They did get

out long enough for them to be caught on tape by our video cameras."

Twin Falls Police Officer Lucas Allen said the quality of the available camera footage is low, and police are trying to enhance it to use in their investigation.

The suspect is described as approximately 5 feet, 6 inches to 6 feet tall, weighing between 140 and 170 pounds.

See **BREAK-IN**, Main 2

BLM passes China Mountain review to public

Comments due July 6

By Nate Poppino
Times-News writer

One of the Magic Valley's largest energy projects crossed a significant hurdle Friday with the release of a draft environmental analysis of its effects. The next step requires your help.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management first gathered public input on the proposed China Mountain wind project in mid-2008. That initial step became the 1,200-page document announced Friday in the Federal Register. Now, the agency will take public comment on its findings through July 6.

Renewable Energy Systems Americas wants to build up to 170 wind turbines along a stretch of Brown's Bench, southwest of Rogerson. The company says the site would generate as much as 400 megawatts of electricity — the first 200 MW of which are slated for a Nevada utility —

See **WIND**, Main 2

At a glance

China Mountain wind project
• 40 miles southwest of Twin Falls
• Up to 170 turbines
• Up to 425 MW total
• \$705 million estimated construction cost
• About 900 acres affected during construction

More online

READ the BLM analysis and the RES conservation plan, and learn how to share your thoughts.
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ComicsClassifieds 8
CommoditiesBusiness 2
CommunityBusiness 3

CrosswordClassifieds 6
Dear AbbyClassifieds 7
MoviesSports 5

ObituariesReligion 4
OpinionMain 4-5
SudokuClassifieds 5

50 / 32



Scattered showers
Business 4