

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Government Affairs Report By Pat Kole

The guiding policies of the federal government in relationship to agriculture are those set forth in the legislation known as the Farm Bill. Congress is supposed to adopt a new Farm Bill every 5 (five) years. Gridlock in Washington D.C. is all we hear about right now, and passage of a new Farm Bill could become a victim of the current political impasse. However, Idaho's two U.S. Senators, along with 42 of their colleagues, have signed a letter to Senate leadership requesting that the bi-partisan Farm Bill passed from the Senate Agriculture Committee, be given time for debate and a vote on the Senate floor. IPC is pleased to have worked with our Senators and their staff in preparing and supporting the letter below.

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Republican Leader McConnell:

With our constant focus on job creation, we write to urge you to schedule floor consideration of the "Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012" as soon as possible. The bill takes steps to reduce the deficit and decrease government spending by \$23 billion. It passed the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry on April 26 with a bipartisan vote of 16 to 5. This sets an example of how Senators can come together in a bipartisan way to craft meaningful, yet fiscally responsible, policy.

We believe there is strong support in the full Senate to consider the bill in a fair and open manner that allows Senators the opportunity to offer amendments. Current authorities for farm risk management, nutrition, conservation, and other farm bill programs are set to expire at the end of this year. According to the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis, nearly 16 million jobs are related to agriculture. But, federal farm policy impacts more than those directly involved in agriculture or living in rural areas. We need to act soon to complete a farm bill in 2012 and provide certainty for farmers, ranchers, rural communities, other stakeholders, and all Americans.

We very much appreciate your recognition of the need for timely action on the farm bill.

Agriculture Featured in Julia Davis Park Renovation

This edition of the Potato Pulse also features an article by Diane Davis Myklegard describing the exciting changes underway at Julia Davis Park in downtown Boise. This effort is part of an outreach campaign by the Idaho Agriculture Community to help urban Idahoans connect with their source of food. IPC has joined with the other Idaho agriculture organizations to support this effort.

Every year more than 1 million people visit Julia Davis Park, named for the wife of Tom Davis, a 19th century agriculture entrepreneur. Tom helped plat the city of Boise and filed for the first water right in Idaho. Like today's producers, Tom and Julia recognized that Idaho was a great place for agriculture.

Lured west by gold fever in the early 1860s, Tom and his brother, Frank, soon realized their future fortune lay in agriculture instead of precious metals. Frank founded one of Idaho's first dairies near State and 21st Streets in Boise. Tom's vision was to grow fresh fruit and vegetables to supply miners in the Boise Basin, the Owyhee Mountains, and beyond. In 1864, Tom journeyed to Portland, Oregon, and returned with 4,000 Red June apple trees, which he planted in orchards between Front Street and the Boise River.

In 1907, Tom donated the riverside orchard land to the City of Boise for its first public park. It was to be named for his beloved Julia who had died that year.

In 2007, Julia Davis Park celebrated its 100th anniversary, kicking off a six-year renovation program to update park facilities and meet the needs of 21st century visitors. A significant part of this renovation included a focus on Idaho's biggest industry, agriculture.

In October of 2011, the Davis Family and Mayor David Bieter hosted the ribbon-cutting and dedication of the Agriculture Pavilion and Make Your Mark Plaza. As of May 1, 2012, the new restrooms and pavilion have opened to the public. In July, engraved sandstone pavers will be laid in the plaza paying tribute to the agricultural donors who helped make this vision a reality.

Built into the pavilion will be a map identifying Idaho's 182 commodities. Also, the Ada County Farm Bureau has sponsored the development of an Apple "app" which will be an interactive educational tool for adults and children to access via smartphone and website to enhance their visit to the park. Local artist Ward Hooper is working on the design for a history walk that will make its way through the Make Your Mark Plaza, telling the story of Idaho agriculture through important dates and facts.

In no other capital city in the United States is an agricultural expression as rich as this found in an urban park. The Davises came to Boise to make their mark; today your mark can join theirs as a permanent representation of your family's contribution to Idaho's agriculture industry. The value is priceless; the opportunity to leave such a legacy happens only once in a lifetime. A limited amount of space is available in the Make Your Mark Plaza. Make your mark today!

For more information on how to make your mark contact: Diane Davis Myklegard at 208-344-5522 or by email at diane@juliadavispark.org. Additional information and pictures can be found at www.juliadavispark.org.