

Idaho: Carefully and Cautiously Progressing

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Abstract

In Idaho, the FY18 budget drew upon the usual agency requests, executive recommendation, and legislative appropriation activities. However, less business-as-usual was the judicial branch involvement due to the post-*sine die* transmittal, and subsequent veto, of a bill to eliminate the sales tax on food. Citing the implications for General Fund revenue and fiscal challenges from extreme weather conditions in early 2017, Governor Otter vetoed the sales tax repeal sparking a legal challenge from legislators. The Idaho Supreme Court upheld the executive veto in a 4–1 decision.

The robust individual income and sales tax collections reported at close of FY17 exceeded the projections used to develop the FY18 budget, prompting automatic transfers to Idaho’s “savings accounts.” This outcome has great significance for the FY18 budget and will almost certainly flavor anticipated FY19 budget discussions in the 2018 legislative session due to residual frustration over tax reforms passed, not passed, and vetoed from the 2017 session.

In terms of FY18, the budget balanced without infusion from Idaho’s savings funds, basic services continued, and modest progress continued in education, economic development, and physical and technology infrastructure. However, the FY18 budget did not reflect important issues including needed regulatory action, tax, and rate reforms intended to catalyze economic development, tax repeals advocated by certain constituencies, medical care access and affordability, and sustainable state capacity. As most of these have long-term budget implications, state government (elected and appointed) will not be able to avoid action indefinitely.

Idaho’s Economy and Public Revenue

Idaho, ranked 39th of all states in U.S. population, is one of the least densely inhabited states in the nation. Idaho shares an international border with Canada as well as state borders with Oregon, Washington, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. As compared to national statistics, Idahoans tend to be white, earn less per capita, and graduate from high school at roughly the same rate, though they are somewhat less likely to finish a bachelor degree. In aggregate, men (50.1 percent) edge out women (49.9 percent) in the population. The reverse is true nationally.

Table 1. Demographics, by Idaho District

		US	Idaho	North ^a	North Central ^b	Southwest ^c	South Central ^d	Southeast ^e	East ^f
Per Capita Income (\$) selected years	2007	\$39,821	\$32,580	\$31,183	\$30,167	\$34,559	\$35,150	\$27,782	\$30,209
	2010	40,277	31,726	30,598	32,129	32,904	33,867	28,679	29,290
	2015	49,571	39,107	37,051	36,753	39,636	44,112	33,665	34,798
Education, 25yr+	High School	27.8%	27.5%	30.4%	28.9%	25.8%	27.8%	29.6%	27.1%
	Bachelors	18.5	17.7	14.5	19.1	19.7	13.6	15.1	19.2
Education, male, 25yr+	High School	28.4	27.4	30.2	29.2	25.4	29.6	30.1	26.0
	Bachelors	18.4	17.6	14.4	17.1	20.1	13.2	14.3	19.0
Education, female, 25yr+	High School	27.2	27.6	30.6	28.7	26.2	26.1	29.2	28.3
	Bachelors	18.7	17.8	14.6	21.1	19.4	14.0	15.8	19.3
Gender	Male	49.2%	50.1%	49.7%	51.1%	50.1%	50.3%	50.1%	50.2%
	Female	50.8	49.9	50.3	48.9	49.9	49.7	49.9	49.8
Ethnicity or Race	White	62.3%	91.7%	94.3%	91.9%	91.2%	91.3%	90.3%	92.3%
	Black	12.3	0.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Amer. Indian	1.7	1.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Hispanic	17.1	11.8	3.8	3.6	13.1	22.6	11.1	10.8

Sources: Per capita income is calculated for each county and county data aggregated by region (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis 2017). Data for gender, education and age is from the U.S. Census Bureau (2017).

^aNorth Idaho consists of Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, Benewah, and Shoshone counties.

^bNorth central Idaho consists of Latah, Clearwater, Nez Perce, Lewis, and Idaho counties

^cThe Southwest district consists of Adams, Valley, Washington, Payette, Gem, Boise, Canyon, Ada, Elmore, and Owyhee counties.

^dSouth central Idaho consists of Blaine, Camas, Lincoln, Gooding, Jerome, Minidoka, Twin Falls, and Cassia counties.

^eSoutheast Idaho consists of Bingham, Power, Caribou, Bannock, Oneida, Bear Lake, and Franklin counties.

^fEast Idaho consists of Lemhi, Custer, Clark, Butte, Jefferson, Fremont, Madison, Teton, and Bonneville counties.

However, aggregated statistics do not capture the variation we know to be true throughout the United States. An analysis of regional differences in Idaho demonstrates variation across the population. This variation reveals much about revenue generation and appropriation patterns, needed expenditures, and concerns about preparing the future.

Idaho is comprised of six regions, defined in practical terms according to geography, population migration, industry, and social identity. Over time, policymakers have formalized these regions into districts. Idaho's 44 counties are distributed among the six districts. Using clusters of counties defined by region, policymakers develop and implement policy in areas ranging from transportation to health. The North and North Central regions comprise the counties in Idaho's panhandle. The Southwest district encompasses the state's de facto metropolitan area (the Treasure Valley), which holds the state capitol, various public and private postsecondary institutions, various corporate headquarters and federal agencies. The Southwest district has an observable disparity between the most and least densely populated areas in the state. Two of Idaho's largest counties (by square miles) are in the Southwest district, but are among the least populated. The South Central district is predominantly agricultural, but includes a growing manufacturing and processing sector. Like the North and North Central districts that tend to identify economically with western Washington, the Southeast and East districts often identify and ascribe more closely to Salt Lake City than Boise.

Location does matter in Idaho in terms of policy concerns, diversity, allegiances to religious and social groups, population growth, and economic opportunity. Shifting demographics in Idaho will affect political participation, revenue generation, and expenditure prioritization. Analysts project an influx of out-of-state retirees in the next decade with location skewed to north Idaho (especially Kootenai County) and southwest Idaho (Ada and Canyon Counties). The Idaho population identifying as Hispanic is better represented (11.8 percent) as compared to the national average (17.1 percent). Significantly, that population is skewed away from the North and North Central regions toward the southern part of the state. In fact, in proportion to the population, the South Central region (at 22.6 percent) exceeds the national percentage (17.1 percent). The far north panhandle of Idaho, the district bordering Canada, faces a more cyclical natural resource intensive economy with the resulting demand for public services.

The per capita income throughout Idaho is less than the national average of \$49,571, and, in many places significantly so. In four counties—Clark, Lemhi, Madison, and Owyhee—the median household income is below the federal threshold for Medicaid eligibility for a family of four. In only three Idaho counties—Ada, Blaine, and Caribou—does the median income exceed the national average (U.S. Census 2017).

Goods producing and nonfarm employment has exceeded national statistics since 2012. Growth has been especially dramatic in construction, logging, and food processing, but this has not yet overcome the double-digit contraction from 2008 and 2009 (see Table 2). Idaho's population is generally employed at a rate higher than the national average, albeit for lower wages. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, at the end of June 2017, Idaho's unemployment rate was 3.1 percent compared to the national aggregated rate of 4.4 percent.

However, Idaho's unemployment rate varies depending upon the region (see Table 3). For example, the northern portion of the state, a region heavily dependent upon tourism and resource extraction (e.g., mining and logging), generally has a higher unemployment rate compared to the remainder of the state. This variation tends to hold true as evidenced by the results for selected years in Table 3. At its worst, the northern region had double digits while the remainder of the

Table 2. Percentage Growth Rates of Selected Indicators for Idaho's Economy, 2008–2017

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Personal Income										
Current \$	3.4	(3.6)	2.0	5.8	5.0	4.0*	5.5*	4.6*	3.0	4.4*
Per Capita Curr \$	1.4	(4.8)	0.6	5.1	4.2	2.9*	4.1	3.3	1.6	2.8*
Employment										
Total Non-Farm Employment	(1.1)	(6.0)	(1.0)	1.2	1.9*	2.5*	2.5*	2.8*	3.1*	1.8*
Goods Producing	(9.0)	(17.7)	(4.7)	1.1	3.8*	5.4*	2.6	4.4*	5.2*	1.2*
Selected Sectors Employment										
Computer/Electronics Mfg.	(11.8)	(22.4)	(4.7)	5.8*	3.9*	(3.1)	1.4*	4.2*	2.0*	(2.5)
Logging /Wood Products	(15.8)	(26.9)	(1.8)*	7.2*	5.2*	9.3*	(1.0)	2.7*	6.3*	(4.6)
Construction	(14.4)	(23.6)	(9.0)	(3.0)	3.5*	7.0*	6.6*	7.2*	8.0*	3.6*
Mining	3.8	(21.8)	6.1*	12.5	4.4	(4.3)	(6.5)	(2.3)*	(0.5)*	(2.2)
Food Processing	4.9*	(1.2)*	(1.3)	(0.6)	2.0*	4.7*	0.7	2.1*	4.1*	2.0*
Non-Goods Producing	0.7*	(3.6)	(0.4)	1.2*	1.6	2.1*	2.5*	2.5*	2.8*	2.0*
Services	0.8*	(3.6)	0.1	2.2*	1.7	2.7*	3.4*	2.9*	4.1*	2.7*
Trade	(1.1)	(7.4)	(1.4)	1.0	3.0*	2.3*	2.0*	3.1*	0.5	1.4*
State/Local Government	1.9*	0.0*	(1.1)	(0.3)	0.1*	0.4*	0.8*	0.7*	1.2*	0.4
Federal Government	3.0*	2.2	1.4	(7.6)	(0.1)*	(1.8)	(0.6)*	1.7*	1.7*	0.6

Sources: Division of Financial Management (2017b, 31-45; 2017c, 6).

Notes: An asterisk indicates the Idaho statistic was more positive than the equivalent national indicators. Decreases are in parentheses.

Table 3. Unemployment Rates^a by Idaho Region/District^b

	Selected Years	US	Idaho	North	North Central	Southwest	South Central	Southeast	East
% unemployed	2007	4.6%	3.1%	3.8%	3.5%	3.1%	2.8%	2.8%	2.4%
	2010	9.6	9.0	11.8	8.0	9.3	8.4	7.6	7.0
	2016	4.9	3.8	5.0	3.9	3.8	3.2	3.5	3.2

Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017).

^a See Table 1 county groupings for each district.

^bPercent unemployed is calculated from county labor force data.

Table 4. Idaho General Fund Major Components and Total Revenue (\$ in millions)

Fiscal Year	Total		Individual Income		Corporate Income		Sales	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
2007 Actual	2,813	15.7	1,400	15.1	190	(2.0)	1,078	22.3
2008 Actual	2,908	3.4	1,430	2.1	189	(0.5)	1,141	5.9
2009 Actual	2,466	(15.2)	1,168	(18.3)	141	(25.5)	1,022	(10.4)
2010 Actual	2,265	(8.2)	1,062	(9.1)	097	(31.2)	956	(6.5)
2011 Actual	2,444	7.9	1,153	8.5	169	74.1	972	1.7
2012 Actual	2,588	5.9	1,206	4.7	187	10.7	1,027	5.7
2013 Actual	2,751	6.3	1,284	6.5	198	6.2	1,110	8.0
2014 Actual	2,815	2.4	1,329	3.5	188	(5.2)	1,146	3.2
2015 Actual	3,057	8.6	1,471	10.7	215	14.4	1,219	6.4
2016 Actual	3,184	4.2	1,513	2.9	187	(13.2)	1,303	6.9
2017 Predicted (Jan. 2017)	3,507	10.1	1,667	10.2	216	15.5	1,447	11.1
2017 revised (Aug. 2017)	3,579	12.4	1,727.3	14.2	225	20.32	1,443	10.7

Source: Division of Financial Management (2017a, 27; 2017e, 2).

Note: The percentages are the differences from the previous fiscal year (decreases in parentheses). The total General Fund also includes miscellaneous taxes and user fees and is usually lumped into ‘other taxes’ for reporting.

state was below 10 percent, with the eastern side of the state hovering between 7.6 and 7 percent unemployment in 2010.

Generally, economic indicators have been positive since the recession, and Idaho has registered a percentage growth higher than the equivalent national statistics (see indicators tagged with an asterisk in Table 3). Fluctuations in the job sectors reflect a similar cycle in terms of a downturn during the recession and steady improvement thereafter. Construction, electronics manufacturing, mining, and the timber/wood products industries took the biggest hits during the recession. Most sectors show a positive increase since 2010, though mining seems to be less robust. State and federal employment is not contributing substantial growth, despite a modest, but steady, increase in state government employment.

Although the Idaho economy is returning to a more normal annual cycle of sector expansion and retraction following 2011, in unadjusted dollars, Idaho revenue collections did not recover until after 2014. Adjusting the figures for inflation tells an even bleaker story, with recovery not

breaking even until after 2016 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017). Given the zeal with which the Idaho Legislature balances its budget, income and employment rates are important indicators of public spending in Idaho. General Fund revenue is derived predominantly from three taxation streams (see Figure 1). Individual income tax (47.7 percent) contributes the largest proportion to public revenue, followed closely by sales tax (41.0 percent), corporate income (6.2 percent) and miscellaneous taxes and fees (5.1 percent) (Legislative Services Office 2017b, 32). The proportional contribution of these revenue streams to the General Fund has been fairly stable over time.

The General Fund has shown steady increases since the recession. A decline in receipts from the 2016 corporate income tax was offset with increases in sales tax and individual income tax receipts. The Division of Financial Management (2017a) reports a similar phenomenon at the close of FY17. Sales tax revenues were dampened somewhat due to tax changes in the spring 2017 legislative session where one percent of net collections (sans revenue sharing) was tagged to address population growth and transportation infrastructure (1). With a stringent fiscal conservatism guiding much of legislative and gubernatorial action in the state, revenue forecasts are conservatively optimistic. The Idaho General Fund collection receipts at close of FY17 exceeded predictions by more than two percent and were 12.4 percent greater than actual collections for FY16 (Division of Financial Management 2017b, 1).

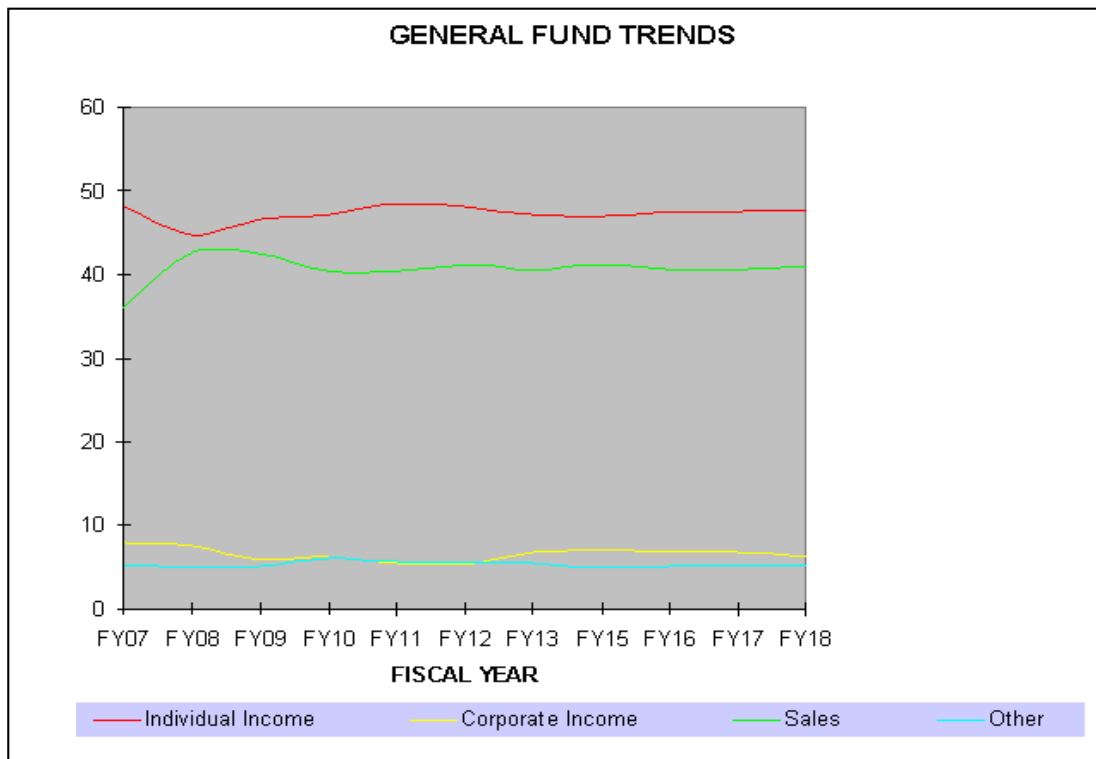
State Budget Process and Decision Points

Like many of the western states, Idaho has a series of decision benchmarks in its budget cycle. The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30 so the FY18 original appropriation was considered in the 2017 session. Agencies may make expenditure adjustments as appropriate within parameters established by statute or executive direction. The FY18 budget included the usual maintenance expenditures (e.g., adjustments for inflation or administrative/compensation costs) along with nondiscretionary adjustments. The nondiscretionary adjustments generally vary, but, for FY18, will reflect declining federal funds in some programs and unanticipated demands upon state resources services during FY17 (e.g., weather related disaster relief).

Revenue used by state agencies is drawn from the General Fund, federal funds from different sources, and dedicated funds. Dedicated funds have specific purposes and are usually tied to special fees or taxes. For example, hunting/fishing license fees go to the Fish and Game Department, while fuel taxes and vehicle registration are assigned to highway-related needs. Both dedicated funds and federal funding often have strings attached, limiting legislative and gubernatorial discretion.

For budgeting, Idaho distinguishes between shares for the six functional areas of education, health/human services, public safety, natural resources, economic development, and general government. Funding is denoted as either sourced from the General Fund or from all funds (which include federal and dedicated funds). Agencies run along a continuum with some almost entirely dependent upon state General Fund revenues and others funded almost in their entirety from either federal funds, trusts defined by Idaho statute, or user fees of various types. For example, certain line-item agencies (e.g., Transportation, Fish and Game, or the Public Utilities Commission) are entirely dependent upon federal funds or monies from dedicated revenue sources such as licensing or fees. These agencies do not receive revenue from the General Fund. Some may receive only small amounts from the General Fund as compared to revenue from either federal sources or dedicated funds (e.g., Environmental Quality, State Police, Agriculture, or Labor). Certain state-level entities are almost entirely dependent upon either local or General Fund reve-

Figure 1. General Fund Trends, Revenue Source as a Percent of General Fund



Source: Legislative Services Office (2006, 13; 2007, 15; 2008, 17; 2009, 19; 2010, 15; 2011, 17; 2012, 23; 2013, 23; 2014, 25; 2015, 27; 2016b, 31; 2017b, 33).

nue for their budgets (e.g., community colleges, the Catastrophic Health Care program, the legislature, or executive agencies such as the secretary of state or attorney general.

Gubernatorial Recommendations and Legislative Responses

Absent funds from the federal government or dedicated accounts, the FY18 legislative appropriation resulted in 62.9 percent of the funding assigned to education with the largest proportion of that going to public schools (48.8 percent). Health and Welfare had the next largest proportional share of the General Fund at 21.3 percent, followed by Public Safety at 9.9 percent, General Government at 3.4 percent, Natural Resources at 1.4 percent, and Economic Development at 1.1 percent. There were only subtle differences between the governor’s proposed budget for FY18 and the legislature’s appropriated budget for FY18 (see Table 5). As in many states, public education and health/welfare spending dominate the general and all funds budgets. Nearly two-thirds of the General Fund budget and more than one-third of all funds spending goes to education. Less than a quarter of General Fund and slightly more than a third of all funds spending goes to health and welfare programs. For the third year in a row, education continued to be a priority as evidenced by Governor Otter’s recommendations for FY18 and the legislature’s initial FY18 appropriation. However, the differences between the FY18 recommendations and the final

Table 5. Spending Shares for FY2017 and FY2018 (shares in percentages)

	General Fund Distribution					All Funds Distribution				
	FY17 Final App.	FY18 Gov. Budget	FY18 Initial Leg. App.	FY2018 initial app. change ^a from		FY17 Final App.	FY18 Gov. Budget	FY18 Initial Leg. App.	FY2018 initial app. change from	
				FY18 Gov. Budget	FY17 Final App.				FY18 Gov. Budget	FY17 Final App.
Functional Percentages										
Education	62.6	62.8	62.9	6.0	5.8	36.0	36.5	36.3	(0.3)	(1.4)
Health & Welfare	21.4	21.6	21.3	6.9	4.8	34.7	36.8	36.5	(0.8)	2.9
Public Safety	9.9	9.8	9.9	4.2	4.6	5.5	5.6	5.7	1.2	1.7
Nat. Resources	1.4	1.4	1.4	2.0	4.6	3.9	3.7	3.8	2.3	(3.4)
Economic Dev.	1.1	1.0	1.1	(1.7)	7.0	15.3	12.5	12.6	0.2	(19.7)
General Govt.	3.6	3.4	3.4	1.1	1.1	4.7	4.8	5.0	4.8	4.7
Major Individual										
Public Schools	48.3	48.7	48.8	(0.5)	6.4	23.8	25.8	25.8	0.1	6.0
Universities	8.3	8.2	8.3	(0.5)	2.7	8.8	7.1	7.1	0.3	(21.1)
HW ^b (non-Med)	4.9	5.3	5.0	(4.5)	9.4	6.9	7.3	7.3	(0.6)	3.1
HW (Medicaid)	15.7	15.3	15.4	(1.2)	3.6	27.4	29.2	28.9	(0.9)	2.9
Adult Corrections	6.5	6.3	6.4	1.0	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.1	1.9	1.0
Juvenile Corrections	1.2	1.2	1.2	(0.1)	1.8	0.6	0.7	0.7	1.4	0.6
Transportation ^c	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	8.4	8.4	(0.1)	(27.0)

Source: Legislative Services Office (2017b, 44-45).

^aFY2017 GF and AF appropriations are final legislative appropriations including supplementals. Shares (proportional allocation of a given budget) are calculated on the whole. The GF and AF “Change from” are calculated as the percentage that the FY2018 initial appropriation varies from FY2018 governor’s recommended budget and the FY2017 final appropriation.

^bHW denotes Health and Welfare with shares calculated to distinguish Medicaid

^cTransportation does not receive General Fund distributions.

appropriation along with legislative action or inaction on regulatory issues related to economic development and tax reform during the 2017 legislative session illustrate the ideological tensions in this Republican majority state. Birkhead (2016, 267) notes that “simply accounting for partisan control of the government is a relatively coarse measure [of budgeting efficiency]. The fact that bicameral distance is significant even when controlling for unified partisan control of government indicates that it is worthwhile to consider the ideological characteristics of political actors.” These tensions set the stage for a potentially contentious legislative session dealing with the upcoming FY19 budget in the final year of Governor Otter’s third and last term.

The Governor's Recommendations

The executive budget recommendations for FY18 showed a percentage decrease in every category except Public Safety (with a modest 0.3 percent increase) for an overall statewide percentage decrease of 1.2 percent from the initial FY17 appropriation. This trend continued what Kinney (2013) noted as “a new normal” for Idaho budgeting—consistent, incremental budget contraction.

Major changes in funding for general government were found in the Permanent Building Fund, which showed a 93.8 percent increase over FY17 appropriation, attributable to four building projects recommended by the governor (see Table 6). The projects, estimated to cost approximately \$10 million each, included a juvenile mental health facility, and one higher education building at each of four Idaho colleges or universities. Recommended funding for the Governor's Office grew by 18.2 percent over FY17, largely attributable to 33 percent growth in the military division, driven by a \$22 million request for a training facility. Growth in the treasurer's budget was attributable to a \$10 million, five-fold increase in the funding of the Idaho Millennium Fund, which distributed gains from the Master Settlement Agreement (e.g., the approximately 10 billion paid out annually by U.S. tobacco companies to settlement states).

The governor's recommendations for FY18 general government growth showed modest increases in funding, though slightly less than the growth requested by agencies. The main driver in State Board of Education funding growth was attributable to two programs recommended by the governor, though not requested by the agency. Each was valued at \$2.5 million. *Principals Pursuing Excellence* would provide funds for training principals at low-performing schools. The other program would provide training to administrators on how to perform teacher evaluations. Expansion in Health Education Programs is attributed to a 25 percent growth in Idaho family medicine residencies and more than double the funding for residencies in psychiatry. This reflects concern about lack of medical care access for Idaho's growing population.

Much of the increase seen between agency requests and governor's recommendations result from increased personnel costs associated with annual wage and benefit cost increases. The governor directed agencies to prepare their budget requests using a one percent figure to calculate wage increases. By January 2017, the governor's recommendation was prepared and ready for presentation to the legislature for consideration, revenue forecasts had firmed up, and the governor was able to recommend a three percent across the board increase in employee compensation, tripling the requested increases for wage hikes for existing employees.

Again, the governor's recommendations reflected moderate growth in FY18 education and health and welfare budgets, but fell slightly below agency requested funding amounts. Analysis of the governor's recommendations revealed a pattern of mostly small increases, suggesting an executive desire to assert control over subordinate agencies, while simultaneously and strategically recommending major expenditures in unrequested areas, signaling executive interest in state progress in specific areas. Governor Otter's support of education, workforce development, and investment in infrastructure (in both physical structures and technology) are reflective of the various taskforces established under his direction to address future concerns for the state. Abnormal levels of snowfall followed by severe flooding prompted Governor Otter's disaster declaration. He projected at least 130 million in infrastructure damage and costs to southern Idaho agriculture, and FEMA initially declined his requests for assistance (Russell 2017d). As of July 2017, upon appeal, FEMA approved eight counties in north and north-central and 11 counties in southern Idaho for disaster relief due to flood damage (Russell 2017e).

Table 6. Executive Budget Recommendations for FY 2018

(\$ in millions)	General Fund			All Funds		
		% Change from			% Change from	
	\$	FY18 Req.	FY17 App.	\$	FY18 Req.	FY17 App.
STATEWIDE	3,465.1	(1.2)	5.9	7,908.9	(0.1)	4.0
GENERAL GOVERNMENT	117.7	(1.5)	5.3	380.1	6.3	20.1
Dept. of Administration	7.7	0.2	0.2	36.5	0.3	4.6
Permanent Building Fund	**	**	**	51.8	95.4	93.8
Attorney General	23.1	(7.5)	2.0	24.7	(7.0)	1.8
State Controller	8.4	0.5	11.3	16.2	0.6	5.6
Governor	23.7	(1.5)	14.8	173.5	(0.1)	18.2
Legislative Branch	12.9	0.6	0.9	15.5	0.6	0.7
Lieutenant Governor	0.2	0.3	1.7	0.2	0.3	1.7
Dept. of Revenue and Taxation	36.4	0.7	1.9	44.0	0.7	1.8
Secretary of State	3.9	0.6	23.1	3.9	0.6	23.1
Treasurer	1.4	0.7	0.6	13.7	(8.6)	107.5
EDUCATION	2,177.0	(1.2)	6.1	2,883.4	(0.7)	5.0
Public School Support	1,686.1	(0.2)	6.4	2,039.1	(0.2)	5.8
Ag. Research & Extension Service	31.3	(2.4)	2.4	31.3	(2.4)	2.4
Universities and College	285.6	(6.1)	2.2	563.5	(2.8)	1.2
Community Colleges	39.3	(8.8)	6.4	39.9	(8.7)	6.3
State Board of Education	9.6	112.1	175.7	18.0	126.5	42.2
Health Education Programs	15.6	10.6	15.4	15.9	10.4	15.0
Career Technical Education	64.2	(4.0)	3.4	73.6	(3.5)	2.4
Idaho Public Television	3.3	1.0	10.1	9.6	(0.5)	3.7
Special Programs	18.7	(9.5)	21.1	22.8	(7.9)	25.6
Superintendent - Public Instruction	15.0	0.5	5.7	41.7	0.4	2.0
Vocational Rehabilitation	8.4	(5.3)	0.7	28.0	(3.5)	0.9
HEALTH & WELFARE	748.1	(1.7)	6.2	2,913.4	(0.4)	3.5
Catastrophic Health Care Program	18.0	0.0	(0.0)	18.0	0.0	(0.0)
Dept. of Health and Welfare	182.4	(6.8)	15.8	578.7	(2.1)	4.7
Division of Medicaid	538.1	(0.0)	3.6	2,306.6	(0.0)	3.3
Public Health Districts	9.3	0.7	0.6	9.3	0.7	(6.9)
State Independent Living Council	0.2	0.3	73.0	0.7	0.4	14.2

PUBLIC SAFETY	339.4	0.3	4.1	444.9	0.3	0.5
Dept. of Corrections	218.3	0.5	1.4	242.5	0.5	(1.1)
Judicial Branch	49.8	1.4	17.5	72.8	1.1	7.8
Dept. of Juvenile Corrections	41.7	(0.2)	1.9	52.1	(0.1)	(0.8)
Idaho State Police	29.5	(2.2)	7.9	77.6	(0.5)	(0.2)
NATURAL RESOURCES	47.2	(0.7)	4.5	294.7	(0.3)	(3.0)
Dept. of Environmental Quality	19.4	1.1	8.3	67.4	0.6	0.1
Dept. of Fish and Game	*	*	*	102.8	0.4	(3.1)
Land, Board of Commissioners	5.7	0.4	6.7	55.1	0.8	(8.5)
Dept. of Parks and Recreation	3.4	0.6	0.6	43.4	(3.6)	3.5
Dept. of Water Resources	18.7	(3.1)	0.9	26.0	(1.9)	(8.0)
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	35.8	(4.8)	5.5	992.3	0.3	1.4
Dept. of Agriculture	11.5	(3.4)	2.8	44.9	(2.0)	3.1
Dept. of Commerce	5.7	(15.1)	0.3	39.8	(2.4)	9.8
Dept. of Finance	*	*	*	8.4	1.0	3.2
Industrial Commission	*	*	*	16.9	0.7	1.4
Dept. of Insurance	*	*	*	9.7	0.3	1.1
Dept. of Labor	0.3	0.9	(12.4)	97.8	(6.7)	(6.7)
Public Utilities Commission	*	*	*	6.6	(0.5)	3.9
Self-Governing Agencies	18.2	(2.1)	9.4	102.5	10.0	5.7
Dept. of Transportation	*	*	*	665.8	0.3	1.5

Source: Legislative Services Office (2017a, 18-21).

The asterisk identifies those budget categories for which General Fund revenues are not allocated. Decreases are in parentheses.

The Legislature's Response

The Idaho Legislature does not experience dramatic changes in membership and even those changes that do occur generally reflect comparable political ideologies. However, during the spring 2017 legislative session charged with appropriating for the FY18 budget, a small far-right cohort in the House of Representatives challenged business as usual, demonstrating ideological rifts within the Idaho Republican Party. Though much of what they advocated (e.g., dealing with terrorism/immigration hysteria) never made it out of committee, their efforts did distract from legislative business. The perennial big issues—health care, education, transportation, and tax relief—had mixed success in the legislature.

Table 7. Legislative Appropriations for FY 2018

(\$ in millions)	General Fund Legislative Appropriation				All Funds Legislative Appropriation			
	\$	% Change from			\$	% Change from		
		FY18 Agency Req.	FY18 Gov. Rec.	FY17 App.		FY18 Agency Req.	FY18 Gov. Rec.	FY17 App.
STATEWIDE	3,450.6	(1.6)	(0.4)	5.3	7,907.2	(0.1)	0.000	(2.3)
GENERAL GOVERNMENT	117.7	(1.5)	0.002	1.1	398.3	11.4	4.8	4.7
Dept. of Administration	7.7	0.2	0.000	0.2	42.6	16.9	16.5	21.4
Permanent Building Fund	*	*	*	*	71.4	169.4	37.9	(8.8)
Attorney General	23.1	(7.5)	(0.05)	1.9	24.7	(7.0)	0.00	1.8
State Controller	8.3	0.1	(0.36)	10.5	16.2	0.5	(0.2)	(7.9)
Governor	24.0	(0.4)	1.05	15.7	173.2	(0.3)	(0.2)	14.5
Legislative Branch	13.4	4.5	3.9	3.8	16.0	3.9	3.2	(2.1)
Lieutenant Governor	0.2	0.3	0.000	1.7	0.2	0.3	0.00	1.7
Dept. of Revenue/Taxation	36.4	0.6	(0.04)	(3.5)	44.0	0.6	0.00	(2.7)
Secretary of State	3.2	(17.1)	(17.6)	(43.1)	3.2	(17.1)	(17.6)	(43.1)
Treasurer	1.4	0.7	0.002	0.6	6.1	(54.2)	(49.8)	3.4
EDUCATION	2,171.2	(1.4)	(0.3)	5.8	2,873.5	(1.0)	(0.3)	(1.4)
Public School Support	1,685.3	(0.3)	(0.05)	6.3	2,041.2	(0.1)	0.1	6.0
Ag. Research & Extension Service	31.3	(2.4)	0.000	2.4	31.3	(2.4)	0.0	2.4
Universities and College	287.1	(5.7)	0.5	2.7	565.0	(2.6)	0.3	(21.1)
Community Colleges	39.4	(8.5)	0.3	3.4	40.0	(8.4)	0.3	3.3
State Board of Education	5.6	23.6	(41.7)	60.6	9.0	13.5	(49.9)	(38.6)
Health Education Programs	15.6	10.6	0.000	15.4	15.9	10.4	0.0	12.3
Career Technical Education	65.4	(2.2)	1.9	5.3	74.8	(1.9)	1.6	(4.4)
Idaho Public Television	3.3	1.0	(0.01)	10.1	9.6	(0.5)	0.0	3.6
Special Programs	15.6	(24.6)	(16.7)	0.9	19.7	(20.5)	(13.7)	8.4
Superintendent of Public Instruction	14.2	(4.9)	(5.4)	0.000	38.8	(6.6)	(7.0)	(5.1)
Vocational Rehabilitation	8.6	(3.1)	2.4	3.0	28.2	(3.0)	0.5	1.4

HEALTH & WELFARE	733.7	(3.6)	(1.9)	4.8	2,889.6	(1.3)	(0.8)	2.9
Catastrophic Health Care Program	18.0	0.0	0.000	0.000	18.0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Dept. of Health and Welfare	174.2	(11.0)	(4.5)	9.4	575.5	(2.6)	(0.6)	3.0
Division of Medicaid	531.9	(1.2)	(1.2)	3.6	2,285.3	(1.0)	(0.9)	2.9
Public Health Districts	9.3	0.7	(0.01)	0.6	10.1	8.8	8.0	0.5
State Independent Living Council	0.2	0.3	0.000	73.0	0.7	0.4	0.0	14.2
PUBLIC SAFETY	340.7	0.7	0.4	4.6	450.4	1.5	1.2	1.7
Dept. of Corrections	220.4	1.4	1.0	2.7	247.1	2.4	1.9	1.0
Judicial Branch	49.4	0.5	(0.8)	16.5	72.4	0.5	(0.6)	7.2
Dept. of Juvenile Corrections	41.7	(0.3)	(0.1)	1.8	52.8	1.2	1.4	0.6
Idaho State Police	29.2	(3.3)	(1.2)	5.7	78.1	0.2	0.7	0.1
NATURAL RESOURCES	48.3	1.8	2.5	4.6	301.6	2.0	2.3	3.4
Dept. of Environmental Quality	19.6	2.3	1.1	9.6	67.9	1.3	0.7	0.8
Dept. of Fish and Game	*	*	*	*	108.1	5.6	5.2	1.4
Land, Board of Commissioners	6.1	6.9	6.5	12.2	55.5	1.6	0.8	(9.3)
Dept. of Parks and Recreation	3.4	0.6	(0.4)	(23.6)	43.5	(3.5)	0.2	(10.6)
Dept. of Water Resources	19.3	0.0	3.2	4.2	26.6	0.3	2.3	(5.9)
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	39.0	3.6	8.8	7.0	993.8	0.4	0.2	(19.7)
Dept. of Agriculture	14.6	23.0	27.4	16.6	48.1	4.8	7.0	5.4
Dept. of Commerce	5.8	(14.4)	0.9	(0.6)	38.8	(4.8)	(2.4)	6.9
Dept. of Finance	*	*	*	*	8.4	0.1	(0.9)	2.3
Industrial Commission	*	*	*	*	16.9	0.1	(0.5)	0.9
Dept. of Insurance	*	*	*	*	9.7	0.6	0.3	1.4
Dept. of Labor	0.3	0.9	0.000	(12.4)	97.8	(6.7)	0.0	(6.8)
Public Utilities Commission	*	*	*	*	6.6	(0.5)	0.0	2.3
Self-Governing Agencies	18.2	(2.2)	(0.2)	3.0	102.5	10.0	0.0	4.4
Dept. of Transportation	*	*	*	*	665.2	0.2	(0.1)	(27.0)

Source: Legislative Services Office (2016b, 18–21; 2017b, 18–21).

Note: asterisk identifies those budget categories for which General Fund revenues are not allocated. Decreases are in parentheses. The FY17 appropriation values are final. The FY17 appropriation includes supplemental, other appropriations that occurred throughout the fiscal year, and reflecting increases or decreases in the appropriations from their initial values. FY18 appropriations are initial, including only the amounts appropriated by the legislature during the 2017 legislative session.

Table 7 details the legislature's support for growth in FY18 appropriations over the prior fiscal year. Legislators rarely left the governor's recommendation intact. Of the 37 agency line-items included in General Fund deliberations, the legislature made no change to eight recommendations, appropriated less than the governor's request in 18 instances, and increased appropriations beyond the governor's request in 11 cases. Overall, the legislature reduced Governor

Otter's recommended spending in two large policy areas: education and health/human services. Because the actual General Fund receipts were higher than forecasted, the initial legislative appropriation is unlikely to shift substantively.

Three major tax reform initiatives during the 2017 legislative session have significant consequences for revenue and, subsequently, budgeting. The two initiatives of particular importance to Governor Otter—a reduction in state personal and corporate income taxes, and a cut in unemployment insurance tax rates—did not make it out of the legislative session. The unemployment insurance rate changes are presented as a necessary support to employers and, when coupled with income tax rate reduction, would facilitate economic growth. On a related matter, an interim committee will consider the need for a change in fee structure for large trucking to support highway maintenance. Observers anticipate that these issues will receive attention in the 2018 legislative session's given Otter's recent presentation to the Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce (Russell 2017f).

The third tax action, the food exemption for the sales tax, successfully passed the legislature in one of several effective collaborations between Republicans and Democrats during the session (Russell 2017a, Dentzer 2017). The exemption of food sold for human consumption from the state sales tax (HB #67 as amended by the Senate on March 22) passed the House on Monday, March 27. Two days later, the legislature adjourned *sine die* at noon. However, the bill was not delivered to Governor Otter until Friday of that week after close of the legislative session. Citing the implications for General Fund revenue and fiscal challenges from extreme weather conditions in early 2017, Governor Otter vetoed the sales tax repeal (Otter 2017).

The veto sparked a legal challenge from legislators. This challenge derived from a legislative claim that the governor had to act within 10 days of adjournment, and without such action, the bill would become law without his signature. The Idaho Supreme Court recently upheld the executive veto in a 4–1 decision (*Nate et al. v. Denney and Otter* 2017), noting that the primary issue, raised by neither petitioners nor respondents, was that the Idaho Constitution “did not authorize the post-adjournment presentation of the bill to the governor” (*Nate et al. v. Denney and Otter* 2017, 10).

Because this decision challenged decades of precedent with implications for a subtle shift of power between the legislative and executive branches, it is likely to influence the upcoming 2018 legislative session and be a point of discussion during the upcoming gubernatorial election. No successful action occurred to address the health care gap, though the issue did see floor debate. An interim panel will be considering state employee health insurance benefits and the issue of community health, medical care and the uninsured will be an ongoing focus.

Summary: Idaho's Political and Economic Horizon

The political context in Idaho could, to borrow from the cake analogies used with models of federalism, be described as fiscal conservatism marbled with social conservatism, frosted with libertarian predilections, and adorned with liberal sprinkles. According to Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2013), citizens in Idaho, Oklahoma, and Utah evidence the most conservative policy preferences in the United States with Idaho slightly edging out Oklahoma for first place (p. 337).

However, conservatism in Idaho is not homogenous, tending to reflect the tensions in the Idaho Republican Party. Moral conservatism captures those who prioritize policies drawn from socially or religiously derived standards of conduct and ascribe the role of government to enforcement. Fiscal conservatives favor policies that reflect a preference for a minimalist government presence derived from reduced spending, but they may have a great deal in common (and find themselves joined in legislative debates) with libertarians who seek an overall contraction of public sector regulation or action. These tensions played out in tax relief/reform outcomes during the 2017 legislative session. Additionally, the clear practical need for an educated workforce and quality of life factors that stimulate economic development mean that the Idaho budget has prioritized education in recent years. In general, while state politicians are frugal, they are essentially practical and invested in the overall economic health of the state in the long term.

Although, as Table 8 denotes, Idaho voters select Republican candidates to a dominant degree, this does not entirely capture the real differences that exist within the Idaho Republican Party, the differences that exist between regions of the state, and the distinctions being raised as gubernatorial candidates differentiate themselves. According to the American Ideology Project (n.d.), ideological differences between the citizens of Idaho are more nuanced than the two-party system generally depicts. For Idaho as a whole, citizens appear significantly more centrist, though right-leaning, than the elected presence of the Republican Party would suggest. The cautious, modest expansion of state budgets in Idaho during the last several years does not reflect antigovernment zealotry as much as a desire to catalyze economic health with prudent investments in an educated workforce and a progressive infrastructure.

Other scholars, in considering outcomes and voting patterns for high-profile initiatives, seem to concur (Witt and Alm 1997; Alm, Burkhart, Patton and Weatherby 2004, 2006). In assessing antigay rights initiatives in the nineties, Witt and McCorkle (1997) note the prevalence of morality politics and likened the political strategies to Schattschneider's (1975) depiction of policy disputants who move between jurisdictional levels and branches of government to expand or contract the scope of conflict until they are triumphant. While morality rhetoric threads some of Idaho's public policy, the initiative did *not* pass at that time in Idaho due, in large part, to a conservatism more libertarian and fiscal than linked to morality politics.

This conservatism does not, however, decry a judicious investment in the public infrastructure. House Speaker Bedke summarized the legislature's pragmatic approach generally and to the 2017 surplus specifically, noting "we did convert a lot of our surplus . . . into investments in things that are going to pay dividends. Let the citizens grow the economy. We've positioned the infrastructure here to be less of an impediment" (Russell 2017a). For example, in a strong collaboration, the legislature and governor acted proactively and positively to address pending public education challenges including improving teacher compensation and infrastructure. Additional attention to school funding will occur during interim panels set for the remainder of 2017.

Decision makers seeking increases in state General Fund revenue will face far less of a public or political outcry if they focus on raising revenue through "sin" taxes, like those on tobacco

Table 8: Partisanship by Idaho District^a

		North	North Central	Southwest	South Central	Southeast	East
% Votes, 2016 Presidential election ^b	Republican	66.9%	58.1%	55.1%	62.9%	59.8%	62.4%
	Democrat	24.8	30.8	32.4	25.1	22.7	17.0
	Libertarian	3.8	5.1	4.6	3.3	3.4	3.4
	Other	4.6	6.0	7.9	8.6	14.1	17.2
ID House Representatives (70)	Republican	8	5	23	7	6	10
	Democrat	1	0	8	1	1	0
ID Senate (35)	Republican	4	3	11	4	3	4
	Democrat	0	0	4	1	1	0
House/Senate Leadership Positions	House	3	1	16	5	5	4
	Senate	4	1	12	4	2	4

Sources: Idaho Secretary of State (2016); Idaho State Legislature (2017).

Notes:

^a See Table 1 county groupings for each district.

^b The regional percentages of votes by political affiliation, obtained at the county level, were aggregated into regional totals by candidate, then divided by the total number of votes cast in the region. In addition to the Republican, Democrat, and Libertarian, the “Other” category included four Independent and one Constitution party candidates.

and alcohol. User fees of various kinds reflect an underlying social and political predilection for individual responsibility; those who benefit from public goods should pay for them. There are limits to this, however, as in the case of postsecondary education, the Idaho Legislature and State Board of Education seem disinclined to increase user fees (tuition and fees) without limitation, recognizing that an educated state benefits the economy.

The swell of support for Donald Trump from nonurban America in November 2016 was not surprising to observers of Idaho politics. Rural Idaho, like many other parts of the country, is deeply alienated from urban centers in terms of access to political institutions and democratic processes, views about economic opportunity, and educational access. It is not unusual to hear distinct lines drawn between “city people” (white-collar professionals or government employees) and “the rest of us” (residents of smaller towns, unincorporated communities, blue-collar workers or those who make a living from resource extraction such as agriculture, mining, or logging). More urbanized communities, especially those with universities and higher tech industries, were

less likely to vote for the Republican candidate in the presidential election and more likely to elect Democrats to the state legislature.

As projected demographics shift, namely through the growth of urban centers and the change in population distribution by age category, this is likely to change the dynamic of the Idaho Legislature with implications for budgeting. Tension between urban centers and rural areas will continue. For example, transportation action was affected by regional concerns as legislators, whether Republican or Democrat, tended to vote along regional lines with some expressed concern that investment in the southwest and south central region did not necessarily benefit north and north central Idaho or the east side.

Marijuana legalization did not come up in the legislature, but it is of ongoing concern to public safety. Of the states bordering Idaho, only Utah and Wyoming have not legalized marijuana for either recreational or medical use. Recreational marijuana is legal in Oregon, Washington, and Nevada, and Montana has legalized medical marijuana. This has created some enforcement issues in Idaho with implications for public safety funding and enforcement along the interstate systems (I-90, I-84, I-86, and I-15). States that have legalized marijuana are reporting revenue gains related to this commodity and it is likely that this issue may be raised either as enforcement costs increase or as an opportunity for expanded sales tax revenue.

A general analysis of the patterns in Idaho budgeting suggests that fiscal conservatism has created a cautious, incremental approach to public budgeting. Despite the modest surplus and higher than projected General Fund revenues, legislators, agency executives, and the governor declined to invest the funds in areas that would demand an ongoing, potentially escalating commitment. This cautious approach served the state well during the last recession, as the cuts Idaho took were not as dramatic as were those in other parts of the country. Most budget requests and recommendations include modest operating cost increases from year to year, capital replacement budget requests to keep the existing physical plant operating, and the occasional request for expanded funding to address new federal or judicial requirements. Gubernatorial recommendations and legislative appropriations generally follow agency requests, with small upward or downward adjustments that follow no dramatic partisan pattern, but might be better understood by considering regional differences.

However, national level policymaking appears somewhat unpredictable. The FY18 appropriation presumes more than \$2.7 billion dollars in funding (Legislative Fiscal Report 2017b), comprising approximately 34.5 percent of Idaho's aggregate budget. Conversations about tax relief or reform in combination with concerns about shifts in federal policy will frame FY18 and the pending 2018 legislative session.

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