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Idaho Lt. Gov. Little makes a visit to New Plymouth

By Cherise Kaechele
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NEW PLYMOUTH — Idaho Lt. Gov. Brad Little met with members of the Snake River Economic Development Alliance Monday at the Internet Truckstop in New Plymouth.

Little and the members of SREDA spoke about concerns for the Payette County area in terms of business development, unemployment rates and the new natural gas companies, specifically Bridge Resources, and the regulations that are being created to protect Idaho.

When the natural gas topic came up, Little explained that extracting natural gas from Idaho is real. The companies would not be signing leases with the land owners if it was not.

“I assume they’re not writing the checks on sheer speculation,” he said.

However, Little said, the most important thing is protecting Idaho’s water.

“We can consume more water per capita than any other state except for Nebraska in Idaho,” he said. “Our whole economy is predicated on water.”

Little said Idaho uses water for tourism, industry and agriculture, and the state’s water must be protected.

Payette Mayor Jeff Williams voiced his concerns for Payette.

“This is new for us,” Williams said.

Williams said he would like to talk with people in Texas who have experience with natural gas collecting and have them explain how it really works.

Jeanette Mayer, with the Internet Truckstop, said New Plymouth’s largest concern, too, is for the water.

Little said, while Idaho is trying to create the regulations protecting the state, legislators traveled to other states with natural gas drilling and took the best laws the states had, as well as the most problematic laws, to consider using, or avoiding, them in the new regulations. Next week, Little said, the first draft of rules for natural gas exploration will be published and can be seen on Idaho’s administrative procedure act website.

SREDA executives also brought up the problem businesses are having by not being able to afford the minimum requirements for supplying employees with health insurance. Some businesses will not hire more employees, even if they need them, because they can not afford giving health insurance.

Kit Kamo, SREDA executive director, said businesses are having problems paying for unemployment, so they are “becoming more efficient with less.” Technology is cheaper than hiring 10 people, Kamo said.



Idaho Lt. Gov. Brad Little (left) and Jeannette Mayer, with the Internet Truckstop in New Plymouth, talk with other business leaders in the community Monday during Little’s meeting with SREDA at the Internet Truckstop offices. Little discussed the economic outlook in Payette County and the importance of protecting Idaho’s water with the new push to extract natural gas in Idaho.

Mayer said that some technology service help was needed at her place of business but because they could not offer the wages the unemployed people would usually receive in their field, they turned the job offers down.

Little also visited the senior class at New Plymouth High School and attended the New Plymouth Kiwanis meeting Monday.

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