

## An Open Letter to the Idaho Legislature

Forty years ago, the Idaho Legislature determined that it would be the policy of the state of Idaho to secure for every citizen basic, fundamental human rights.

The enabling legislation creating the Idaho Human Rights Commission stated the purpose directly and forcefully. The Idaho Human Rights Commission would exist:

To secure for all individuals within the state freedom from discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin or disability in connection with employment, public accommodations, and real property transactions, discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin in connection with education, discrimination because of age in connection with employment, and thereby to protect their interest in personal dignity, to make available to the state their full productive capacities, to secure the state against domestic strife and unrest, to preserve the public safety, health, and general welfare, and to promote the interests, rights and privileges of individuals within the state.

Now this noble charter and the work of the one of the smallest, but most important state agencies face grave danger under a proposal to phase out all state funding for the Commission. It must not be allowed to happen.

We implore the members of the Idaho Legislature to resist any initiative to reduce the effectiveness of the Commission, to diminish its already scarce resources and to send the most unwelcome and damaging message that Idaho has ceased to place human rights at the absolute forefront of the state's priorities.

We need not remind Idaho state government that it was not that many years ago that Idaho's image and reputation was unfairly sullied by the presence in our midst of messengers of hate and ministers of discord. Idahoans were united then – and must be united now – in rejecting any assault on human rights. We came together in the past to send a powerful and righteous message that Idaho would not tolerate discrimination and would not give comfort to those who deny basic human dignity to all her citizens.

The Idaho Human Rights Commission is on the absolute frontline in this continuing battle and has been for more than 40 years. For four decades, the Commission has ensured Idaho workers and employers that laws concerning discrimination will be fairly and properly applied. Even demanding economic times must not be an excuse for abandoning the principle that the state of Idaho supports this work both in word and deed.

It should be a priority of the 60th Idaho Legislature to secure for another 40 years and beyond this essential, vital function of state government.

Cecil D. Andrus  
Governor of Idaho, 1971-1977, 1987-1995  
U.S. Secretary of the Interior, 1977-1981

John V. Evans  
Governor of Idaho, 1977-1987

David H. Leroy, Boise  
Attorney General of Idaho, 1979-1983  
Lt. Governor of Idaho, 1983-1987

Greg Carr, Idaho Falls native  
Founder of the Carr Center for Human Rights at Harvard  
(Mr. Carr financed the purchase of the former Aryan Nations compound in northern Idaho)

John Hansen, Idaho Falls  
Former Republican Idaho State Senator

Laird Noh, Twin Falls  
Former Republican Idaho State Senator

Jesse Berain, Boise  
First Director, Idaho Human Rights Commission  
Former Republican Member Idaho House of Representatives

Marilyn Shuler, Boise  
Former Director, Idaho Human Rights Commission

Leslie Goddard and Stephen V. Goddard, Mountain Home  
Former Director, Idaho Human Rights Commission

Bob Trerise, Boise  
Former President, Idaho Human Rights Commission

Gayle Speizer, Boise  
Former President, Idaho Human Rights Commission

Amy Herzfeld, Boise  
Ex. Director, Idaho Human Rights Education Center

Richard and Sondra Hackborn, Boise  
Hackborn is a former Chairman, Board member and executive with Hewlett Packard

Don and Susan Curtis, Boise  
Former Hewlett Packard and St. Luke's employees  
Human Rights Activists

Rich and Georgiann Raimondi, Boise  
Raimondi is a former Hewlett Packard executive

Skip Oppenheimer, Boise

Mary Lou Reed, Coeur d'Alene  
Former Idaho Democratic State Senator and Founding President of the Human Rights Education  
Institute

Tony Stewart, Coeur d'Alene  
Founder, NW Coalition Against Malicious Harassment

Cherie Buckner-Webb, Boise  
Chair, Board of Directors Idaho Black History Museum

The Right Reverend Brian J. Thom, Boise  
Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Idaho

Rabbi Daniel Fink, Boise  
Congregation Ahavath Beth Israel

Dr. Said Ahmed-Zaid, Boise  
Islamic Center of Boise

Rev. David Carlson  
Retired, General Presbyter, Presbyteries of Boise, Eastern Oregon and Kendall  
Presbyterian Church, USA

Will Rainford, Boise  
Legislative Advocate for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise and Catholic Charities of Idaho

Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth, Cottonwood  
(Sister of Human Rights Activist Bill Wassmuth)

J.D. Williams, Boise  
Former Idaho State Controller

The Honorable Bryon Johnson, Boise  
Former Idaho Supreme Court Justice

Mike and Arlene Mitchell, Lewiston  
Former Democratic Idaho House and Senate member

Bethine Church, Boise

Clarisse Maxwell, Boise  
Human Rights Activist and Board Member Idaho Black History Museum

Christine Wood, Coeur d'Alene  
Task Force on Human Relations

Joanne Harvey, Coeur d'Alene  
Task Force on Human Relations

Ken Howard, Coeur d'Alene  
(Participant in the lawsuit that bankrupted the Aryan Nations)

Norm Gissel, Coeur d' Alene  
Attorney and Human Rights Activist

Chris and Gail Bray, Boise  
Former Members Ada County Human Rights Task Force  
Gail Bray is a former Democratic Idaho State Senator

Lisa Uhlmann, Boise  
Co-Founder, Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial

Meredith Carnahan, Boise

Bob and Betty Sims, Boise  
Former Dean of Public Affairs, BSU  
Community Activists

Frank and Barbara Roberts, Boise

Lyn McCollum, Boise

Joyce Harvey-Morgan, Boise  
Former Dean of Extended Studies, BSU

John and Elizabeth Sullivan, Moscow

Mary Hindson, Boise

Mary Clagett Smith, Boise

Henry and Sue Reents, Boise  
Sue Reents is a former Democratic Idaho State Senator and IHRC Commissioner

Bill and Jane Lloyd, Boise

Marc C. Johnson, Boise