

# Quiet but not inactive

**Randy Stapilus/Ridenbaugh Press**

Six months ago, and six months from now, the Idaho Legislature was and will get getting into gear, reviewing budgets and rule and bill proposals.

And while that will look like the busy season, a lot of what they do actually has its origins in work being done now, in the quiet time, in the middle of summer. When our political attention is drawn mostly to the national party conventions. When it would seem, to judge from most headlines, that little governmental action is really ongoing.

In fact, a stroll around the Capitol Mall about now probably would give you the impression that the times in state government are fairly sleepy.

But not really. A good deal of legislative prep work is underway, for example, in legislative interim committees. The Public School Funding Committee (discussing one of the biggest topics in almost any legislative session) met on July 12, the committee on health care alternatives (as hot a topic as any) met July 21, the panel on state employee benefits will meet August 3 and the children at risk committee meets August 4.

These committees and a bunch of others will shape some of the key legislation in the 2017 session. A lot of interim legislative activities are held in the summer (they're being set up in the spring, and fall meeting dates are often a problem in campaign season).

July 1 is an important state government date. It is the default date for new laws to take effect, which means switching over and evaluation in a number of areas. It also is the dividing line between fiscal years, the point when the books are closed on the old year, and revenue analysis has to begin for the new one.

Partly for that same reason, budget work starts to get underway in midsummer. State agencies are supposed to receive a budget manual in July, and submit their requests either this month or in August. You won't see the results, not publicly, until after the new year, but the groundwork is beginning to be laid even now.

You'll hear more about state administrative rules when the legislature reviews them in January, but a lot of the crunch work is underway now – in the period well after the legislature adjourns, but well before (allowing for publication and other schedules) the legislature returns. Because of the legislature's intensive review of the rules, the window for actually developing and reviewing them is relatively short, at the other end of the year.

And many state boards and commissions hold summer meetings, which in some cases are among the most critical meetings of the annual cycles; partly because of those budget and rulemaking considerations. The Fish & Game Commission met July 6, the Idaho Workforce Development Council on July 14, the state Land Board and Board of Corrections on July 19, and the Water

Resource Board and Oil and Gas Commission on July 21 – just to cite a few examples from so far this month.

Of course, regional and local governments continue on through the year as well, and they too have budgeting and other considerations that keep them busy over the summer.

It may be vacation season for many people, but that doesn't mean nothing's happening. Quite the contrary.