

Member Profile: Idaho Representative Clark Kauffman

Chair, CSG West Agriculture & Water Committee

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Idaho Representative Clark Kauffman entered politics after redistricting led another Representative to run for the State Senate. As a highway district commissioner and member of the Idaho Grain Producers Association board, Representative Kauffman was regularly involved in promoting legislation or, more often, trying to preempt what he saw as bad legislation. "I was encouraged by other legislators and neighbors that it was my turn to put my name in the hat."

As a farmer in Idaho's Magic Valley, Representative Kauffman believes he brings an important perspective on agriculture and rural issues to state policymaking. But while he acknowledges a difference in perspective between rural and urban legislators, he values both. He says, "I haven't talked to any urban legislator that wasn't open to finding out the views of the rural areas, and I hope I'm the same when it comes to some of the urban issues that they deal with on more of a steady basis than I do."

Representative Kauffman will be beginning his sixth year in the legislature next session, but he admits to some mistakes as a rookie legislator. One of his first bills was in support of the cottage food industry. He explains, "I didn't include everybody, like the food processors and [others], and...all of a sudden the alligators come out of the water, and you didn't even know they were there."

From this experience, Representative Kauffman learned to share his ideas with all of those who might be affected, and to get feedback from more experienced legislators. He calls



In Brief: Rep. Kauffman

- ✓ First elected to legislature in 2012.
- ✓ 2015 WLA graduate; graduate of Leadership Idaho Agriculture.
- ✓ Occupation: farmer.
- ✓ U.S. Air Force Vietnam veteran
- ✓ Lives in Filer, Idaho.
- ✓ Board Member, Filer Mutual Telephone Company; member, Twin Falls County Fair Foundation; former president, Idaho Association of Highway Districts, Idaho Grain Producers Association and Idaho Hay and Forage Association.

his first-year seatmate, Representative Maxine Bell, “a great mentor and sounding board.”

In a time of political polarization across the country, one of the values Representative Kauffman emphasizes is the importance of compromise. When asked about his proudest accomplishments as a legislator, he describes a successful conjunctive water management effort in which groundwater pumpers and a surface water coalition came together to recharge and stabilize an important aquifer. Previously these groups were bitterly divided, and the conversation was difficult. According to Representative Kauffman, everyone had to give a little, but they all stayed in business. “I think the word ‘compromise’ has been hijacked, and made into a bad word,” he says. “But if you’re going to govern you have to have compromise because if you discuss something, you have two different views and you have to meet somewhere in the middle. That’s so important—to give and take.”

Looking ahead to the 2018 legislative session, Representative Kauffman expects continued discussion about tax policy, public lands and water policy in the committees on which he serves. His goal in representing his constituents in the Magic Valley is to

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ensure the next generation has some incentive to stay or return there to raise their families. “We have to make sure we have a growing economy,” he says. “We need to maintain that with good tax policy and infrastructure to

export the goods we produce, and protect our water, get our aquifer stabilized and recharged.”

To do this, Representative Kauffman hopes to accomplish three things by the time he leaves the legislature:

1. Ensure adequate funding to support the road infrastructure that enables businesses to export;
2. Maintain business-friendly tax policies that encourage companies to move to and expand in Idaho;
3. Ensure the state’s water law is up to date, and that everyone stays in business by compromising on use of the water.

When asked for any advice for other legislators, Representative Kauffman quoted a speaker at a leadership conference, who said “You know, your job isn’t always just to solve problems; it’s to make sure that the conversation continues. As long as the conversation is continuing, our republic will be OK.”