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**IDAHO GRAIN PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION**

**TESTIMONY OF ERIK OLSON**

**ON CHANGES TO THE CROP RESIDUE**

**BURNING PROGRAM**

**Before the Senate Health and Welfare Committee**

**Wednesday, January 25, 2017**

Chairman Heider, members of the Committee, my name is Erik Olson. I am a farmer from Bonners Ferry, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 1009, that makes changes to the Department of Environmental Quality’s Crop Residue Burning Program.

I am a wheat grower in Boundary County. I am a member of the Idaho Grain Producers Association, and I also serve on DEQ’s Crop Residue Burning Advisory Committee – I’ve been involved with this issue for years.

I support the bill brought forward by DEQ, and I want to thank them for their thorough process. I participated in their negotiated rulemaking meetings over the summer. We heard from experts and stakeholders on all sides of the issue. In the end, DEQ felt they couldn’t justify making changes to any other pollutant, since right now the only pollutant with a change at the Federal level that would affect crop residue burning in Idaho is ozone. And all parties have agreed – the crop residue burning program has worked well with the criteria where they have been, with the exception of ozone.

Idaho has background ozone that is here due to no gault of Idaho’s farmers – but present at high enough levels that is has prevented the Department from approving burn days. So, we support the Department’s proposal to move the ozone threshold higher than it had been previously, so that DEQ doesn’t have its hands tied by ozone when it is determining whether a day is good for burning.

Senate bill 1009 does two things – first, it does not accept the new lower federal standard for ozone for 2017. This will allow the program to work like it has in previous years. If we had to accept the new federal standard without changing the 75 percent requirement, farmers that burn their crops would be significantly, negatively impacted. DEQ estimated that the result of tightening the federal standard without changing Idaho’s program would be one half to two thirds fewer burn days than we typically see in a burn season.

The second thing Senate bill 1009 does is change the percentage of ozone allowable from 75 to 90 percent of the federal standard starting in 2018. This allows DEQ to both protect public health and let farmers burn on days when the conditions are ideal. Ozone levels in the atmosphere are not effected by crop residue burning – but background levels of ozone have prevented crop residue burning from being approved in the past. Increasing the criteria for crop residue burning to 90 percent of the federal standard is still tighter than the standard the federal government has set for healthy air – and it is going to give farmers and DEQ a lot more flexibility when it comes to burning.

Thank you again for this opportunity – I’m happy to answer any questions, and I ask the Committee for a do-pass recommendation on Senate bill 1009.