



# United States Congress

NEWS RELEASE

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## **CRAIG, SIMPSON LAUD PUBLIC LANDS BILL PASSAGE** **-- Measure Includes Three Idaho Lands Provisions --**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig and Idaho Representative Mike Simpson today said passage of a Senate public lands legislative package will strengthen activities and missions at three Idaho lands and historic sites.

The package which passed the Senate by a 91 to 4 vote incorporated three pieces of legislation introduced last year by Idaho’s Congressional delegation and reported to the full Senate by the Energy and Natural Resources Committee on which Craig serves.

The Idaho measures include the Minidoka National Historic Site Act of 2007, the American Falls Reservoir District Number 2 Conveyance Act, and the Southern Idaho Bureau of Reclamation Repayment Act of 2007.

“Idaho has a lot at stake in this large bill which authorizes 62 programs and activities of the Forest Service and the Interior and Energy departments, including land conveyances, boundary adjustments, studies, memorials, commissions and national park natural resource protection,” Craig said.

“This public lands bill contains legislation needed for Idaho,” said Simpson. “The irrigation provisions will finally correct long standing technicalities and allow Idaho farmers to repay construction costs to the Bureau of Reclamation. The Minidoka National Historic Site will find its way to the President’s desk. This is the historic site of Idaho’s Japanese internment camp during WWII. Its preservation will allow future generations to learn from our history.”

Craig introduced the Minidoka National Historic Site Act in 2007 to adjust the boundary of the Minidoka Internment National Monument located in Idaho to include the Nidoto Nai Yoni memorial owned by the City of Bainbridge Island in Washington State. That memorial commemorates the Japanese Americans there who were the first to be relocated to internment camps during World War II.

Included in the historic site is the Herrmann farm, part of the Minidoka Relocation Center, one of 10 city-like camps where Americans of Japanese descent were interned during World War II. After the war, the Herrmann farm land was transformed into small family farms, many going to World War II veterans.

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Legislation affecting the second Idaho public lands site, the American Falls Reservoir District Number 2 Conveyance Act, authorizes the Interior Secretary to convey specified land to the American Falls Reservoir District Number 2 in Jerome, Lincoln and Gooding counties, to the City of Gooding and to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The third Idaho measure is the Southern Idaho Bureau of Reclamation Repayment Act of 2007. The concept of acreage limitations regarding Reclamation irrigation water originated with enactment of the Reclamation Act of 1902. The primary goal of the Reclamation program at that time was to develop the arid West by promoting farming opportunities for families and limiting speculation on land that would benefit from the introduction of irrigated agriculture.

Many farmers have reached retirement age and are asking to pass their farms down to family or simply sell their land unencumbered. While these farmers' wishes are understandable, their implementation has placed undue burdens on A & B Irrigation District.

The Southern Idaho Bureau of Reclamation Repayment Act of 2006 authorizes prepayment by landowners of their allocated portion of the obligations to the Bureau of Reclamation within A & B Irrigation District and will allow individual landowners to prepay their obligations if they desire. Nothing in this Act releases financial obligations by any private party to the United States Government.