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**To:** [Scott Zanzig](#); [Elaine Maneck](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: Docket#CC-2025-OGR-001-005 public comment  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 24, 2025 11:59:28 AM  
**Attachments:** [Rocky Barker - Alta Mesa House Bill 301.doc](#)  
[Rocky article re oil and gas being held.doc](#)  
[Rocky Barker - Alta Mesa House Bill 301 lobbying laws.doc](#)

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**Sent:** Wednesday, December 24, 2025 11:51:29 AM  
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**Subject:** Docket#CC-2025-OGR-001-005 public comment

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Please add the following documents to the record on Docket#CC-2025-OGR-001-005.

In keeping with statements I made during the hearing at Fruitland City hall on December 17 I submit the following:

1. Idaho Statesman article demonstrating that Snake River Oil and Gas CEO Richard Brown fought all efforts by the 2017 Idaho Legislature to pass an oil and gas reform bill designed to force oil and gas operators - including him and his operating partner at the time, Alta Mesa Idaho - to report more honestly regarding the hydrocarbons they pulled out of the ground and to make those reports accessible to the royalty owners, taxpayers and the general public. House Bill 301 was the result of numerous citizen complaints (eventually leading to a class action suit). Brown threatened to leave the state if the bill passed.
2. Idaho Statesman article demonstrating the lengths certain lawmakers went to in order to unfairly kill the bill, which I and my group CAIA supported
3. Idaho Statesman article demonstrating illegal lobbying activity by oil and gas industry representatives

Shelley Brock  
President, Board of Directors - C.A.I.A.  
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# Idaho Statesman

## Lawmaker defends shelving oil & gas critics' comments on proposed regs, releases letters



### Letters from the West

Energy and environmental news from across the West



Picture shows a subsidiary of Alta Mesa's natural gas dehydration plant near New Plymouth. **Kyle Green** [kgreen@idahostatesman.com](mailto:kgreen@idahostatesman.com)

BY ROCKY BARKER

[rbarker@idahostatesman.com](mailto:rbarker@idahostatesman.com)

House Resources and Conservation Chairman Marc Gibbs didn't initially share letters sent to the committee by oil and gas activists supporting legislation they say would protect landowners.

But he changed his mind Monday and handed the letters out as he started a marathon hearing that ended Monday evening with no action. The committee will resume consideration of the bill Tuesday.

Meanwhile Idaho Gov. Butch Otter and House Speaker Scott Bedke joined three lawmakers [Monday in endorsing](#) the bill to increase transparency and competition in Idaho's oil and gas industry. "No piece of legislation is ever perfect. However, [House Bill 301](#) is a step in the right

**W.Barlow-PC0067**

direction for an industry that could provide big benefits for Idaho – if we do this right,” they wrote in an opinion submitted to Idaho newspapers.

Members of Citizens Allied for Integrity and Accountability, a group that has been critical of Idaho’s 7-year-old oil and gas industry, sent dozens of letter in support of Republican Rep. Judy Boyle’s bill that [requires more transparency and encourages](#) competition in the industry. Gibbs, that group claims, held those letters up but provided his committee with letters written in opposition.

CAIA was “outraged by this elected official’s clear abuse of his chairmanship through obstructing critical information, in what strongly suggests a show of favoritism toward one company over the rights of Idaho citizens,” said Shelley Brock, a CAIA board member.

But Gibbs reversed course when the hearing began, handing out the packets of letters and telling the crowd he did not intend to favor one side over the other.

Gibbs, R-Grace, first said he held the letters because they were written in support of Boyle’s first version of the bill, HB 232. He also held that particular bill in his desk and it is no longer before the committee. Boyle introduced a new version last week, [HB 301](#), which had a long hearing Monday before it adjourned.

Boyle, R-Midvale, and her District 9 colleagues, Rep. Ryan Kerby, R-New Plymouth, and Sen. Abby Lee, R-Fruitland, pressed for the legislation after complaints from property owners and suspicions that the state and landowners weren’t getting their fair share.

Brock said the CAIA letters were first emailed March 7. When committee members reported they had not received them, a CAIA member hand-delivered 20 packets of hard copies March 9.

On March 17, Gibbs’ secretary wrote to tell the group the letters had been tucked in a drawer. “It’s a different bill (now),” Gibbs said.

“Our charge as a committee is to foster oil and gas exploration for all citizens of Idaho,” Gibbs said. “This statute should be for all of the citizens of Idaho and not one geological area.”

Kerby had described the legislation as a “District 9 bill.” All eight producing wells in the state owned by Houston-based Alta Mesa are in Payette County and that district.

Brock, of Eagle, said her group represents people far beyond Payette County.

“For these documents to be blocked without our knowledge is the worst kind of deception and we question the legality of that action,” Brock said, “as well as the level of integrity and accountability demonstrated by any elected official capable of doing such a thing.”

*Rocky Barker: [208-377-6484](#), [@RockyBarker](#)*

# Idaho Statesman



The natural gas dehydration plant owned by a subsidiary of Alta Mesa near New Plymouth. Kyle Green - [kgreen@idahostatesman.com](mailto:kgreen@idahostatesman.com)



## Letters from the West

Energy and environmental news from across the West

LETTERS FROM THE WEST

## Did Alta Mesa violate lobby laws? Denney says company needs to register as lobbyist

BY ROCKY BARKER

[rbarker@idahostatesman.com](mailto:rbarker@idahostatesman.com)

March 16, 2017 04:19 PM

For

seven hours late into the night of March 9, representatives of petroleum companies Alta Mesa, its partner Snake River Oil & Gas/Weiser Brown Oil Co. and LoneTree Petroleum met with Gov. Butch Otter and several legislators behind closed doors to try and hammer out a compromise on oil and gas legislation.

LoneTree, a Wyoming company, backs Rep. Judy Boyle's bill to rewrite oil and gas code in Idaho, seven years after gas was discovered in Payette County. Alta Mesa, the only company producing oil and gas in the state from eight wells near New Plymouth, has opposed the bill Boyle introduced March 1.

Boyle, R-Midvale, introduced a revised bill Thursday that she said includes changes requested by Alta Mesa.

Lobbyists for both sides complained about the lobbying credentials for the people working on the issue and who participated in the March 9 meeting.

State officials present included Boyle, Rep. Ryan Kerby, R-New Plymouth, Sen. Abby Lee, R-Fruitland, Rep. Fred Wood, R-Burley, Rep. John Vander Woude, R-Nampa, House Speaker Scott Bedke and Gov. Butch Otter. The chairs of the House and Senate resource committees, Rep. Marc Gibbs, R-Grace and Sen. Steve Bair, R-Blackfoot, attended, as did staff from the Idaho Department of Lands and the governor's office.

Alta Mesa registered lobbyists Kate Haas and Mike Christian and four other Alta Mesa employees were involved in the discussions in person. Others called in by phone.

C.J. McDonald, who is registered as a lobbyist for LoneTree Petroleum, participated in the meeting, as did Suzanne Budge, the former executive director of the Idaho Petroleum Council, who is registered to lobby on other issues. Payette rancher J.G. Schwarz said he, rancher Harry Soulen of Weiser and

**W.Barlow-PC0069**

Payette County landowner Mike Roe, a Boise lawyer, participated on their own behalf. Richard Brown, whose Snake River Oil and Gas is a major investor in the Alta Mesa oil and gas drilling in Payette County, also was there.

John Foster, Haas and Christian are registered as lobbyists for AM Idaho and other subsidiaries of the Houston-based petroleum company. But neither the corporation nor its executives have registered to lobby, despite regular contacts between CEO Hal Chappelle and other employees with legislators, Gov. Butch Otter and other state officials.

Such contacts are a violation of the state's lobbying laws, according to Idaho Secretary of State Lawrence Denney.

Idaho statute says lobbying "means attempting through contacts with, or causing others to make contact with, members of the legislature or legislative committees or an executive official, to influence the approval, modification or rejection of any legislation by the legislature of the state of Idaho or any committee thereof or by the governor or to develop or maintain relationships with, promote goodwill with, or entertain members of the legislature or executive officials."

Those contacts include communications influencing rulemaking, the statute says.

The law exempts employees of a corporation, if the corporation registers as a lobbyist.

Records at the Secretary of State's Office show that Alta Mesa has not registered. A week before the March 9 meeting, Chappelle was in the Capitol meeting with Otter, lawmakers and other state officials.

Denney said the only proper lobbying contact for unregistered corporate CEOs or their employees is to testify in an open meeting. He said Alta Mesa appears to be out of compliance, but he also said he had no intention of fining them and has received no complaint against them.

"Our thing is not the money," Denney said. "It's the disclosure."

He won't act unless he gets a complaint, he said. A violation is a misdemeanor under state code, subject to a fine of up \$2,500. But a remedy for such a violation is to register as a lobbyist.

"We call them. If they are reasonable, we do not fine them," Denney said.

Budge and former U.S. Sen. Larry Craig have lobbied on oil and gas issues extensively on behalf of themselves, LoneTree and other companies interested in doing business in Idaho and western Oregon, both said. But neither gets paid for that lobbying, they said.

Denney and his Chief Deputy Tim Hurst said Budge and Craig are not in violation of the lobbying statute, because they don't get paid. Schwarz, who were representing himself, is not required to register as a lobbyist, Denney and Hurst said. Soulen and Roe, representing themselves, fall into the same category.

Alta Mesa lobbyist and AM Idaho spokesman Foster disputed that the company was out of compliance. He noted that Boyle represents the district Denney formerly represented in the Legislature. Larry Craig, he said, comes from the same hometown, Midvale.

"This would not be the first time Tim Hurst got it wrong," Foster said. "It's this kind of political gamesmanship that is making Idaho a difficult place to do business."

*This story has been revised to correct factual errors and include more detail about the attendees at the March 9 meeting.*

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# **Idaho Statesman**

Letters from the West

## **Oil and gas exec says House bill would discourage investment in Idaho industry**

By Rocky Barker [rbarker@idahostatesman.com](mailto:rbarker@idahostatesman.com)

MARCH 07, 2017 10:18 AM



Idaho Sen. Abby Lee, speaking in mid-2016, calls for rules that encourage competition for Idaho's oil and gas industry. BY ROCKY BARKER

A partner in the only oil and gas company producing petroleum in Idaho has told state officials he will reconsider his investment in the state if a comprehensive bill to reform the state's regulations of the industry passes.

Richard Brown is CEO of [Snake River Oil and Gas](#), which owns 25 percent of [AM Idaho's](#) operations, and he acts as a consultant for the Houston-based operator Alta Mesa. He said he was shocked by the scope of [the 46-page bill introduced by Midvale Republican Judy Boyle](#) last week.

"I think this bill as is absolutely a deal killer," Brown said.

Brown, who lives in Houston and Sun Valley, brought Alta Mesa to Idaho in 2012, taking over the operations of Bridge Resources, the company that discovered natural gas in Payette County in 2010. Today Alta Mesa has eight Idaho wells after investing \$160 million, but because of the downturn in oil and gas prices has recovered only a fraction of that investment.

Brown said he had talked to Boyle throughout 2016 and knew she was working on legislation. He did not know the bill was, as she described it, “a complete rewrite of the oil and gas code.”

Boyles’s bill, [House bill 232](#), has the support of her two District 9 Republican lawmakers, Ryan Kerby of New Plymouth and Abby Lee of Fruitland. All three are Republicans. The bill came after [complaints from property owners](#) and [suspicions that the only company](#) producing gas and oil in the state was not paying its fair share.

Brown acknowledged the company “needs to do more” to address what he said are misconceptions about the company’s production.

Brown and [Alta Mesa CEO Hal Chappelle](#) met with Idaho Gov. Butch Otter and other state officials March 2 to explain to them how oil and gas flows from wells through their pipelines and processing facilities and eventually to markets by rail. Company officials sought to assure the state officials that the company is paying royalty owners and the state tax commission what it owes.

Boyle’s bill opens up to public review records that had been closed to the public and even the state for six months to a year. To encourage competition, it also requires the [Idaho Department of Lands](#) to post the records on its website and release them without requiring a public records request.

C.J. McDonald, CEO of [Lonetree Petroleum](#), which is seeking to begin drilling on land it has leased in Idaho, said the transparency provisions will attract more competition and better prices for mineral right owners. Brown disputes that.

“Based on current prices and the stifling regulatory environment, we will be lucky to ever see profit,” Brown said. “That is what stifles competition.”

[Harry Soulen, of Weiser, one of the landowners](#) who pushed for the landowner protection portions of the legislation, said he believes the transparency sections of the bill are good for all sides because they will build trust in the industry.

Brown said there is still a chance to bring the sides together.

“If there is going to be a bill, industry needs a seat at the table,” Brown said.

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Picture shows Alta Mesa's natural gas dehydration plant near New Plymouth, part of the company's \$160 million investment in Idaho. KYLE GREEN [KGREEN@IDAHOSTATESMAN.COM](mailto:KGREEN@IDAHOSTATESMAN.COM)