

KEMPTHORNE PLEDGES TO BUILD CONSENSUS SOLUTIONS

By Frank Quimby, Office of Communications

As the 49th Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne views his priority mission as building consensus solutions to critical challenges facing the nation and the Department.

"One of the things that I pledged to the President is that I would reach out to constituent groups, to seek bipartisan support, to find common ground, and to build consensus," Kempthorne told senators at his May 4 confirmation hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

As governor of Idaho, a former U.S. senator, and mayor of Boise before that, Kempthorne was known for his ability to work effectively with those who don't always agree with him.

"Throughout my public service, I have reached out to both sides of the aisle, to different interests and to different viewpoints," Kempthorne explained. "All who worked with me saw my consensus approach."

Kempthorne, who was confirmed by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote in the U.S. Senate on May 26 and took the oath of office the same day, also believes that the level of government closest to a problem is the most effective place to find a solution. "I do not believe in bigger government, but I believe in better government," he said.

In his meetings with members of Congress, the major issues discussed included restoring habitat for fish and wildlife, improving economic development and education in Indian country, resolving longstanding water conflicts, and providing environmentally responsible energy development.

"In Idaho and in the U.S. Senate, I have worked on those very issues," Kempthorne said. "I have sought and won consensus solutions."

During his six-year term in the United States Senate (1993-1999), Kempthorne's major accomplishments included winning passage of his legislation to end unfunded federal mandates on state and local governments and to substantially revise the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

"John Glenn, a Democrat from Ohio, was my partner on the Unfunded Mandates Bill," Kempthorne noted. "On the Safe Drinking Water Act, the first senator to sign on as co-sponsor was Bob Kerrey of Nebraska. That was the first environmental bill that contained a cost-benefit analysis."

The revised Safe Drinking Water Act remains one of the few environmental-law update bills that became law. The revisions give small communities greater flexibility in meeting federal water standards and allow the Environmental Protection Agency to focus its limited resources on contaminants that pose the greatest health risks.

Kempthorne also noted his efforts in the mid-1990s, as chairman of the Senate Drinking Water, Fisheries and Wildlife Subcommittee, to pass bipartisan Endangered Species Act legislation with the Clinton administration. The bill included ideas on creating incentives for landowners to protect endangered species as an alternative to strict regulation.

"We made great progress," he said, "and I look forward to again being at the table discussing ways to improve the Act and make it more meaningful in helping the very species that we are trying to save."

As governor, Kempthorne worked on some of the most challenging wildlife issues facing the West, including salmon recovery and removing wolves and grizzly bears from the endangered species list.

"When I assumed office, I saw that the four northwest states were developing their own separate salmon restoration strategies," Kempthorne recalled. "I asked my fellow governors in

Montana, Oregon and Washington if they would consider working together to explore policy consensus that would be acceptable to our states on salmon recovery. In a collaborative effort, we crossed state lines and political lines to come up with a regional, consensus strategy to salmon restoration.”

“I want to help foster that same collaborative approach on similar issues -- whether it is the silvery minnow in the Middle Rio Grande, the pallid sturgeon in the Missouri or the endangered fish in Klamath,” Kempthorne told senators.

Under his leadership, Idaho also developed wolf and grizzly bear management plans aimed at delisting the endangered species and giving the State of Idaho management responsibilities.

Kempthorne reached out to key interest groups – sportsmen, ranchers and environmentalists -- to draft wolf and grizzly bear management plans that would ensure protection once the animals were removed from the endangered-species list. Approved by Idaho’s state legislature in 2002, these plans are the foundation of federal proposals to delist both species. Based on Kempthorne's proposal, the Bush administration earlier this year transferred to Idaho and Montana day-to-day control for managing wolves.

Kempthorne also established Idaho’s Department of Environmental Quality, significantly expanding what had been a small division in the Department of Health and Welfare.

“Giving it full departmental status raised environmental issues to their rightful place in my administration and if you ask industry or the environmental community, they will tell you that it was the right decision and that we made it work.”

Kempthorne also created the Governor’s Office of Species Conservation, elevating Idaho’s concern with listed species to a new level and giving the state a voice in endangered-species management. The office reports directly to the governor on issues regarding endangered, threatened and other at-risk

species, taking into consideration both the fate of the species and the economic vitality of the state.

"I am intent upon saving species," Kempthorne said. "I am not content with this 'triage,' where you simply say they're endangered and then move on to list the next species. I will always ask, 'What are we doing to actually restore the species instead of just listing them?'"

Kempthorne also noted that one of the few species that has been removed from the endangered species list is the Peregrine Falcon. "It was delisted -- in part because of the hard work of the Peregrine Fund, a private organization," he said. "Idaho is proud to be home to the Peregrine Fund and the World Center for Birds of Prey. Their accomplishments show that species recovery is possible when we work together, the kinds of accomplishments that result from collaboration."

Kempthorne said he has worked on Native American issues with similar intensity. "I was intent that we would find a solution to the water rights claims of the Nez Perce Indian Tribe dating back to the 1800s," he noted. "So with the great leadership of the Tribe, surface and ground water users, agricultural interests and municipalities and the Interior Department, we began a dialogue that was -- in all honesty -- at times acrimonious, tough, and on the verge of collapse. I thought then that the alternative -- several more years of litigation -- was no alternative at all."

"Our discussions transformed adversaries into allies," Kempthorne said. "We crafted a solution that everyone could lay claim to -- instead of a process that would determine 'winners and losers'. Today, we have an historic agreement."

The Nez Perce water rights agreement resolved the tribe's water claims, created new protections for endangered salmon and secured Idaho water and development along the Salmon and Clearwater rivers.

Kempthorne thanked Idaho's congressional delegation -- U.S. Senators Larry Craig and Mike Crapo and Representatives C.L. "Butch" Otter and Michael Simpson -- for guiding the Nez Perce agreement through the Senate and House for approval.

"I commit to bringing the same energy and concern that I had for this settlement to other Indian and water rights issues," Kempthorne vowed. "Necessity and practicality require that we adopt holistic approaches to water issues. Much of the nation has endured the worst five years of drought in the past five hundred years."

Maintaining good relations with Indian country will be critically important, Kempthorne emphasized. "As senator and governor, I recognized that Tribes should be partners in discussions that matter. There can be no more important issue than educating Indian children. The Secretary of Interior, working with Tribes, is responsible for 48,000 Indian school children and I take that responsibility seriously. I look forward to continuing this emphasis on educating Native American children."

He commended the President and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for investing \$1.6 billion in Indian school construction over the past five years. That has funded 37 new schools and 45 major repair projects.

"I want to raise the level of awareness as we diligently work to heighten the expectations of parents, and inspire hopes and affirm dreams of children in Indian Country so that they can achieve anything they put their minds to. We must work so they have the skills and the education they need to accomplish that." Interior also has a vital role to play in managing public lands and waters that produce 30 percent of the nation's domestic energy, Kempthorne said. "All of America is experiencing pain at the pump with high gas prices. This is an issue of economic security as well as national security. I pledge to work with you and stakeholders on responsible energy development."

He noted that the Energy Policy Act of 2005 identified significant initiatives for the Department -- initiatives which pertain to traditional energy sources as well as new sources.

"I am committed to implementing these initiatives and keeping Congress informed of our progress," he said. "The President and Congress have placed great importance on developing alternative energy sources. I am mindful of the great potential that alternative energy sources can play in providing for our citizens and furthering environmental protection.

"Also, because of the new world we've entered, the Department will be mindful of its obligations to homeland security and its responsibilities to protect our national icons and our waterways."

Kempthorne also affirmed his love of the outdoors. "Idaho is home to spectacular scenery, and we welcome hunters, anglers and all outdoor enthusiasts who want to enjoy her natural beauty," he noted.

"When the President announced his intention to nominate me as Secretary of the Interior, he mentioned that Patricia and I were married in northern Idaho on Moscow Mountain at sunrise. There is no more beautiful cathedral than the outdoors. And our entire nation is blessed with countless natural cathedrals, and we should be mindful of those great treasures."

Kempthorne also pointed out that as governor he fought to get more resources for parks, and this year had asked the Idaho legislature to make a once-in-a-generation investment in state parks.

"Just a few weeks ago, I was proud to sign the largest appropriation ever for our state parks system." He said. As Secretary, the Department of the Interior's emphasis will continue its responsibility for parks and recreation -- which certainly includes wildlife refuges and access for citizens to enjoy parks and refuges."

As Secretary of the Interior, I pledge to do the best I can, and I will be honored in making that effort," Kempthorne said. "This nation, its people and natural beauty are well worth all of our collective efforts to preserve and protect."

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MAYOR, SENATOR, GOVERNOR, SECRETARY: KEMPTHORNE'S PUBLIC SERVICE CAREER

Dirk Kempthorne, 54, began his public service as the Mayor of Boise (1985-1992). During his seven years in office, he helped direct a renaissance in the state's capital city that resulted in record growth, economic development and numerous national honors and recognitions for quality of life, business climate and family issues.

Among his major accomplishments as mayor, he brokered a plan to reduce wood-burning that had polluted the air and brought federal limitations on Boise industry and growth. Kempthorne also forced developers and local officials to hammer out a Downtown plan that became the impetus for Boise's Downtown rebirth, a critical catalyst for the booming economy since 1990.

As a U.S. senator from 1993 to 1999 and chairman of the Senate Drinking Water, Fisheries and Wildlife Subcommittee, Kempthorne won passage of major legislation which ended unfunded federal mandates on state and local governments and revised the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. He also developed bipartisan Endangered Species Act legislation that would have offered incentives for landowners to protect endangered species as an alternative to strict regulation.

Kempthorne served nearly two terms as Governor of Idaho, elected first in 1998 and reelected in 2002, working to develop consensus on management of Idaho's and the West's natural resources, including salmon restoration and delisting of wolves, grizzly bears and other species.

Following the devastating wildfires of 2000, he worked with fellow western governors and federal officials to fundamentally change the approach to forest health and wildfire management. He also worked to improve the quality of life for American active duty military personnel, reservists, their families, and veterans.

As governor, Kempthorne was recognized by his peers as a national leader. His colleagues elected him as the Chairman of the National Governors Association in August of 2003. He has served as President of the Council of State Governments and Chairman of the Western Governors Association.

He was on the Executive Committees of the National Governors Association and the Republican Governors Association. Secretary of Education Rod Paige appointed then-Governor Kempthorne to the National Assessment Governing Board and Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge appointed him to the Homeland Security Task Force.

Kempthorne was born in California and raised in Spokane, Wash. He graduated from the University of Idaho in 1976. While there he served a term as student body president. Upon graduation, Kempthorne served as an assistant to the director of the Idaho Department of Lands and then as executive vice president of the Idaho Home Builders Association.

His wife Patricia also is a University of Idaho graduate. The Kempthornes have two grown children, Heather and Jeff, and a son-in-law -- Heather's husband Drew.

"Patricia, Heather and Jeff have been by my side throughout my public service, and continue to be a source of great encouragement," Kempthorne said. "They have allowed me to pursue my passion of helping people, finding solutions to problems, and making our communities and our state a better place to live, to work and to raise a family. I thank my family for that love and support."

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BIPARTISAN GUBERNATORIAL SUPPORT

When his nomination was announced, Dirk Kempthorne drew praise from most of his fellow governors, including Democrats such as Arizona's Janet Napolitano, who heads the Western Governors' Association.

In a bipartisan letter sent to the U.S. Senate before Kempthorne's confirmation hearing, Napolitano and 38 other governors strongly supported his nomination.

"As a colleague, we have all worked with him in a bipartisan manner and found him to be an individual of great intelligence, honesty and integrity," the letter states.

"Furthermore, being a governor of a Western state, he has a vast understanding of federal lands and the federal-state relationship in managing those lands and vital natural resources."

Interview with Fox TV News
Transcript of Fox and Friends Interview
May 30, 2006

The brand new Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne, joins us live from Washington, D.C. Congratulations, sir. It's your first day on the job. What are you going to do?

"Today I'll be reaching out and talking to governors from around the United States, mayors and county commissioners, tribal leaders, leaders of conservation and environmental groups, and energy producers, so this is just an opportunity to let them all know that I'm on the job and reaching out, the communication channels are open, but also significantly I'll visit a couple of those wonderful parks that are very near my office, the Washington Monument and the World War II Memorial."

. . . E.D.: You've got a number of great spots for America's families to vacation this year, starting out in Washington, D.C.—

the Lincoln, Washington, and Jefferson monuments and memorials.

“That's right, E.D. And you know, President Bush and Congress have made real efforts here. In the last few years, they've invested nearly \$5 billion in renovations and improvements to our national parks, and so I think people are going to see some real improvements there, but the national parks and certainly the monuments, which you mentioned, as families visit those, it is so wonderful to hear the enthusiasm of children as they see these wonderful monuments.”

E.D.: That's what's on the penny. Steve: Mr. Secretary, let me ask you about this. I know there's been a great debate over energy and what we can do about it, and I know that Florida's congressional delegation narrowly defeated an effort to get energy exploration just off the coast of the United States. During your time as Secretary of the Interior, are you going to work to see more drilling offshore?

“You know, I'm going to work with the state delegations from throughout the United States. Of course we know that we do have to have the energy that sustains us as part of our economic vitality and part of our national security, but there has to be a way that you do this and you achieve environmental balance and the sensitivities to the environment. Also significantly, Congress recently passed [and] the President signed [legislation] that we're also to be aggressive in looking at alternative energy sources, so I believe we can bring a balanced equation to this whole effort.”

E.D.: Secretary Kempthorne, thank you for joining us.

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