

DISTRICT 1 STATE REPRESENTATIVE, SEAT A

Profile of Mike Boeck

By Ben Olson
Reader Staff

Editor's Note: Mike Boeck is running as a Republican for District 1 House of Representatives Seat A.

Reader: Tell me a little about your history in North Idaho. How long have you been here?

Mike Boeck: I was born and raised here, fourth generation. My great grandparents were some of the original founders. I know my great grandmother was one of the founders of the First Presbyterian Church here in town. My great grandpa, he was a millright, taxidermist, carpenter and jack of all trades. So yeah, I've got some pretty deep roots here. I attended all public schools here, attended University of Idaho and got my degree in forestry, mainly in the engineering side of forest products. ... I served in Idaho National Guard, retired after 20 years as a combat engineer. So I've got some pretty good practical experience as well in that field and it really relates back to transportation issues - roads and bridges.

SR: Speaking of transportation, that's one of the top issues on your platform. Why is transportation important for North Idaho?

MB: Like I said, it comes a little from my education background in engineering and military, how important it is to maintain good transportation and infrastructure. As a mill manager in Priest River, we saw that highway between Sandpoint and Priest River as a death trap. Over the course of the years, I was able to work with companies like LP and the state of Idaho to get that road, like dead man's curve taken care of. ... We worked to get that highway rebuilt. But one of the biggest challenges was getting that bridge over Priest River to our mill done. ... It's so important to this district that we keep the focus on that. One thing I've learned on this campaign is that infrastructure is more than highways and bridges. It's high-speed internet, it's the ability to communicate from some of our rural areas in cellular. It's access to natural gas. ... As we encourage new business in this area, particularly in the aerospace industry, just a tremendous opportunity here to bring in good high paying jobs in a very clean industry, but they need that kind of infrastructure.

SR: Idaho was recently named the fastest growing state in the nation. How do we manage this growth responsibly?

MB: Well, I'd like to see it the way

it was in the '50s, but that isn't going to happen. People are going to come here whether we like it or not. Quite frankly, you get two different groups that come here: the ones who really embrace what we have here, then you get the ones who want to really change everything. But we cannot afford not to keep up with growth, and it has to be good responsible growth. Schools in particular. We need to keep up with our educational stuff, and workforce development is one huge part of this package. Career technical education is so important. We need technical welders and stuff like that in the aerospace sector. ... I've been on Idaho Forest Products commission for over 20 years now and our mission is to provide the public with the knowledge of how we best manage our natural resources, our forests. That doesn't mean we're going to go in and clear cut everything, but we've seen our national forest deteriorate immensely over the last several years, from insects, and disease and fire. So there's lots of things to do to improve upon that.

SR: Let's talk about your opponent, Heather Scott. It seems she has spent a lot of her time in office focusing on ideological issues. Do you agree with how she has served this district in her past terms?

MB: Well, just to set the record straight, I'm not running against Heather Scott. I'm running for what I feel is a better future for this district. I know I can do a better job working with the legislature getting some of these problems solved that we need solved. A lot of the stuff she pushes are federal issues. That's all well and good. I'm not against pushing back against federal overreach by any means. I've done it all my career. But I think we have to know what the role is of a good legislator. Going around the district and talking to supporters, I feel that I can do a much better job to represent those views. I've always been considered a pretty strong conservative, but by today's standards, I guess I might be pretty moderate.

SR: Are you dedicated to serving all of your constituents, no matter what their political leanings?

MB: That's the definition of a representative, right? If I get elected, I'm elected to serve all the constituents of this district. Not just a very narrow view. That doesn't mean I agree with them, that doesn't mean I will always vote the way they would like me to vote, but I will certainly listen to them. I'm not going to do anything that's going to embarrass them.

SR: Politics has always been contentious, but it has ramped up in the past couple years. How will you handle this divisiveness? How do you bridge the gap?

MB: I've been working to do that even though I'm not an elected position right now. On different issues. Scotchman Peak for one, the smelter for another. I've got ideas that I think can help bridge some of discord on that stuff. All this hysteria and a lot of misinformation that goes around. I'm not one to jump on the bandwagon without knowing all the facts. In my career, speaking of the smelter, I've dealt with the EPA in regulating emissions on our burner boiler system. We were able to solve those problems installing electrostatic precipitators and other things that really improved air quality and environment in the area. I think sitting is a problem with that. It could be sited different, where it's not in such a critical air shed, even though emissions might not be as bad as some claim, it would be better sited closer to the dam, closer to airsheds that don't impact the population as much. Those kind of industries produce the products for solar panels, so how do you get there unless you have industry that creates it? Those are hard issues. Like I've told some folks, if it's half as bad as some of the critics say is, I'm totally against it. But I want to know that for sure, and I want to know if there's a better way to approach this thing.

SR: Let's talk about some other issues. How about the second rail bridge that BNSF is proposing over Lake Pend Oreille?

MB: Railroads have a lot of power within the federal system, but you have to look at the reality. That's still one of the safest modes of transportation we have by far. That bridge has been there for over 100 years, to this point we haven't had an accident. Doesn't mean one won't happen. But by improving the infrastructure with a second bridge, we could reduce the odds of that happening. I sat in on the presentation that was made on how we deal with something like that. Emergency response stuff. I think there's a real effort to improve on that. I would encourage that as a state legislator. These waters are really precious to us here and I really, really think we need to do everything we can to maintain the quality of our water.

SR: What about the proposed Scotchman Peaks wilderness designation. Your opponent is a big supporter of the state of Idaho taking

over federal land. Where do you fall on this issue?

That's kind of right up my alley, this kind of stuff. It's not as important who owns the land, it's how it's managed for the benefit of our district and our state. We're faced with a huge percentage of land that is state or federal, primarily federal. When they don't manage them for the benefit for the people, people get upset. There's been a lot of work, here and up in Boundary County, I'm seeing really good progress with tribes, state, federal government on how do we best manage these lands. That's the direction we need to go. On the Scotchman area, I think there's some room for compromise. ... I have no problem with them having a special place like that, but there are areas along the west side and south side that really have got a lot of people upset. There's old logging areas, why you'd want to include those areas in a wilderness, I don't understand. At one point that wilderness line went right down middle of Lightning Creek Road. You could move it back a mile and the folks who want the wilderness wouldn't know the difference frankly. ... That's one of the ways we could bridge some of this division here.

SR: Do you have anything we haven't touched on that you'd like to talk about today?

MB: School funding, I'll tell you, that right now is under fire. If you look at what my opponent proposed recently about the bonding levy proposals. It's funny, instead of looking at how we can solve these problems, it just exasperates the problem. Why do we need to do that? Personally I think that super majority is onerous, but I also believe the elections should be held when more of the public can participate in voting on levies, they want to roll that back to one a year. Her group also wants to eliminate all federal funding of education in Idaho. Well, that kind of stuff is just devastating to the ability to maintain our schools in these rural areas. Why she would do that, I have no idea. There are a lot of folks, for some reason, that are dead set against supporting our public education system. Believe me, that's snot where I stand. We have some of the most fantastic natural resources as anywhere in the nation, and if we can't support our infrastructure and education then shame on us. But to go after the voters and make it so difficult to actually gain the kind of financial support we



need for our rural schools, I don't think that's the direction we want to go, and I think I can make a big difference. I have some ideas on how we can relieve some of the property tax issues on levies and bonds, but it has to do with how we manage and develop our resource base in this state. ... Bottom line, when things go sideways, that's where I get more involved. We've got some really good responsible folks from our party that have served, and I want to be counted in that group.

Mike Boeck AT A GLANCE

AGE: 68

BIRTHPLACE AND RESIDENCE: Sandpoint. Currently lives in Wrenco.

GOVERNMENT SERVICE: Wrenco committeeman for 20+ years, Sen. Keough's first campaign manager, Phil Batt's county chairman when he was elected Gov., 20 years in Idaho Nat. Guard (retired Major), Over 20 years commissioner District 1 Idaho Forest Products Commission. Served on Ready Fit Working Group.

PROFESSION: Professional forester and resource manager. Managed number of mills in 40-plus years, not only in human production side, also natural resource side to manage land, timber, protect water.

EDUCATION: B.S. Forestry, U. of Idaho. SHS grad. Certificates from NIC in log scaling.

FAMILY: Dee (wife), kids Justin, Alyssa. Three grandkids.

FUN FACT: Mike is a rabid instrument builder. He participated the last three years at Lionel Hampton Music Festival. He's built two mandolins, three violins, two guitars and a stand-up bass. He participates in the slow jam session at the Heartwood Center. He's also a hunter, fisherman and likes to dirt bike. Finally, he has his private pilot's license.