

# Squaw changes squashed

■ Hornbeck leads action to head off gesture of political correctness

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OF THE TRIBUNE

**B**OISE — On a close vote, the Idaho House State Affairs Committee Monday killed the resolution that would have started a re-naming of places in Idaho bearing the name "squaw."



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The close 10-9 vote prompted immediate discussion among advocates of the measure that they might try again this session.

The drive to kill the proposal was led by Rep. Twila Hornbeck, R-Grangeville, who contacted a number of other committee members about

The vote surprised advocates of the measure and even the committee's chairman, who said he had not expected much difficulty sending the measure — which had passed the Senate with almost no opposition — to the House floor.

## Squashed

the measure last week.

"I think we were lucky," she said. "People saw through the political correctness of this. This is Idaho. We don't want to do this."

"I feel like it's never been a bad word."

As for a second run at the Legislature, Hornbeck said, "I don't think it'll fare any better the second time around."

Hornbeck arrived in the committee meeting with a stack of four dictionaries, none of which, she said, say the word has negative connotations. She told the House panel that instead, referring to the legislation, "I find this offensive. ... I find it offensive for people to come and tell me what my language means."

The resolution was proposed by the Idaho Indian Affairs Council Feb. 1 and later passed by the Senate State Affairs Committee unanimously and by the Senate with but one dissenting vote, that of Sen. Stan Hawkins, R-Ucon.

It would not have directly required any change of place names. It would have asked the state Department of Lands and Human Rights Commission, and the tribes, to set up a committee to review those place names. It would then go to a committee of the Idaho State Historical Society, which would eventually make specific

recommendations.

State Sen. Ralph (Moon) Wheeler, R-American Falls, who also heads the Indian Affairs Council, said it probably would be a process lasting three or four years, allow for extended comment from the public, and might not ultimately result in changing all the "squaw" names.

Tribal spokesmen and others said the word is a demeaning word for women and should be stricken as a place name.

"The only thing that I could say is we're quite disappointed by the action taken by the House State Affairs Committee," said Samuel N. Penney, chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee.

He cited the Webster New Collegiate Dictionary, which defines "squaw" an American Indian woman and as "woman, wife, usually used disparagingly."

"So I think that the definitions show that it is used disparagingly. And I understand some of the legislators said something — that their friends call their wives that, or they may call their wives that — but to them it should be degrading as well because it's referring to them as below them, or below their class.

"The only other thing I can

say," Penney said, "is with the state's reputation nationwide, usually referring to some of the things that happen here as far as with the Aryan Nations and other groups, I don't think this helps the image of Idaho. In fact, it may affirm it. But what I always say is there are people like that in Idaho and there are a lot of good people here within the state."

"To say I'm disappointed is an understatement," Wheeler said following the vote. "If this were a word that northern Europeans thought was hurtful to their mothers or their systems it wouldn't take very long to change it."

Sen. Joe Stegner, R-Lewiston, who also serves on the council and backed the resolution in the Senate, said after the vote, "I think that it's very unfortunate that the House has taken that attitude. I think that, obviously, the Senate actions were much better for the state, much better for the citizens of the state, much better for the future of the state of Idaho, and I'm disappointed the House apparently doesn't share that same vision that I do and that the Senate does."

Rep. Bill Deal, R-Nampa, who heads the House State Affairs Committee — and a supporter of the resolution — said afterward, "I was a bit sur-

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