

# The Idaho Organization of Resource Councils

Hello fellow IORC members!

It's been another exciting year of seizing opportunity for our organization to move towards realizing our shared vision. Since I haven't gotten the chance to directly connect with many of you, I want to share some personal reflection from the past year at IORC, update you all on some current work I've been connecting with as a member, and share some excitement for grassroots organizing to build community despite a need for social distancing.

We had a big win during the 2020 Legislative Session. In the morning of March 12 in front of the Senate Agriculture Affairs Committee our staff and members showed collective strength by turning out a room full of people to testify against HB 487. This would not have been possible without behind the scenes organizing by members of our new chapter *Visión 2C* Resource Council who are determined not to let the two dozen workers poisoned in a Parma onion field be forgotten. For those of you who may have missed it, IORC and various partners successfully lobbied against attempts by pesticide applicators to weaken regulation of their industry. Get the full story from the legislative update.

Being able to point to shared organizational experiences builds collective power! In the weeks after that public hearing and subsequent legislative victory, conversations shifted to COVID-19 response. The Ag and Food Team along with several community partners is coordinating efforts to get local food to essential workers on farms in the Treasure Valley. A small team of us are also reaching out to farmers across Southern Idaho asking them to share stories from their farms to highlight how shopping small and local not only helps grow localized economies, but also promotes resiliency for times of crisis such as these. Mutual aid in the form of a renewed commitment to keeping more of our money circulating locally is a step we can all be taking.

Sitting in my living room on the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day I am reminded that this celebration began as a grassroots day of action. That day millions of Americans mobilized, and their efforts are credited towards the creation of our Environmental Protection Agency. As IORC's metaphorical table grows, I challenge you to double down efforts. This is a watershed moment for American, and with a focus on connection and resilience, I believe it can be for IORC as well.

I look forward to hearing from chapter representatives at our virtual May board meeting about the work you all have been up to. Please feel free to reach out any time with questions, updates, or just to get to know each other better.

Lookin' Forward,  
Christina Stucker-Gassi  
IORC Board Chair



# A New Chapter for IORC

Idaho Organization of Resource Councils is thrilled to announce the addition of our third chapter! After a year of hard work, the organizing committee, led by IORC Bilingual Community Organizer Irene Ruiz, launched the new chapter in Canyon County, Idaho. Visión 2C Resource Council celebrated with a party at the College of Idaho in Caldwell and discussed ongoing concerns for the safety of farmworkers in southwestern Idaho.

The organizing assessment was well underway when a team of farm workers were exposed to pesticides in Parma, Idaho last May. The exposure poisoned many of the workers, resulting in long-lasting health impacts for several on the team. The Visión 2C organizing committee jumped into action to hold leaders accountable for the poisoning. The committee, comprised of former farm workers, farm owners, and community leaders, has worked tirelessly to connect the impacted farm workers with resources, elevate their voices through media, and advocate for safer regulations from elected officials. Their work was instrumental in fighting House Bill 487 during the 2020 Legislative Session. This bill would have relaxed regulations for aerial pesticide applicators—the same type of applicators that led to the poisoning in May 2019. The bill passed the Idaho House but was amended in the Idaho Senate to address the concerns Visión 2C members fought against through grassroots lobby efforts. House Bill 487 was eventually vetoed by Governor Little but the fight continues. Visión 2C members will keep the pressure on Idaho’s leaders through the upcoming rule-making process.

A new chapter for Idaho Organization of Resource Councils also signals the addition of a new element of organizing for the team. As IORC continues to fight against oil & gas and for sustainable food sourcing, the organization will also be examining the protections and ethical considerations for the hard working community members who grow, harvest, deliver, and prepare our food.



We strive for community driven social justice that is multi-generational, multicultural, and is representative of the people of Canyon County.

# A (Revised) Vision for 2020

Many people don't start creating new years resolutions until it's time to buy a new calendar but the staff at Idaho Organization of Resource Councils began planning for 2020 with plenty more time. In early December the staff gathered in Pine, Idaho for a goal-setting staff retreat. What followed was three days of team building and intention setting for our journey ahead. We returned to the office – and cell service – with pages of notes and posters to turn into metrics, budgets, and operational plans. We never could have imagined how drastically our lives would change in the months ahead.

The IORC staff had helped launch Visión 2C and was winding down the legislative session when COVID-19 finally reached Idaho. Trainings were postponed, travel halted, and subscriptions to Zoom were established. It became clear that working remotely would quickly become our new normal, though not without some drawbacks. Our small team made some adjustments and dove into learning how to organize in a time of crisis. We are now in collaboration with other community organizations such as Community Council of Idaho, ACLU of Idaho, and Immigrant Justice Idaho to organize protection for farm workers and their families. We have also worked with our chapters to establish tele-conference meeting resources and moved our own meetings online.



As we all move together in this uncertainty, the IORC family will continue to support each other and our networks. Our lives may look drastically different now than they did back in December but our commitment to our communities hasn't changed. We will adapt in new and unexpected ways to make sure our members, teams, and state can stay healthy and vital in the months and years ahead.

We would like to send a big thank you to all of our members who came down, called, and emailed lawmakers during the 2020 Legislative Session. Your hard work and determination was critical to our collective efforts!





Idaho Gives is well underway and this year we're Farming it Forward! All of our raffle prizes during the two-week fundraiser have been purchased from a local vendor. It's our way of giving back to the community that gives so much to us.

Donate today at: [www.idahogives.org/organizations/idaho-organization-of-resource-councils-iorc](http://www.idahogives.org/organizations/idaho-organization-of-resource-councils-iorc)