



DISTRICT 27 e-NEWSLETTER – March 11, 2014

This week was very productive because we got through a number of key issues that will help us finish the people's business and adjourn sine die by March 21. While there are still major issues to resolve, several pieces of legislation were passed this week which move us closer to adjournment.

Speaker Scott Bedke

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This past week the House of Representatives voted on SB 1254, legislation that establishes the right to carry a concealed weapon, with the appropriate training and permitting, on Idaho's college campuses, but only in certain specified locations. Lengthy testimony was offered in committee, and the floor debate was heartfelt on both sides of this issue. I voted in favor of this bill, based on the following considerations:

Banning firearms on campuses is an abridgement of the fundamental right, guaranteed by Article I, Section 11, of the Idaho Constitution, to keep and bear arms, which preserves a citizen's right to self-defense. To see this article, click [here](#). It is not currently illegal to possess a firearm on a public college or university campus. The universities have been given the authority to enact **regulations** against doing so, but these can be enforced only against those over whom the college has authority, such as students, faculty and staff.

A "regulation" against firearms on campuses will be observed by law-abiding people, but it most certainly will not be a deterrent to one who is intent on committing a crime. Given that, I believe that allowing concealed weapons will increase safety on campuses, rather than make them more dangerous places. Campuses are large, expansive spaces. In Idaho the colleges and universities do not maintain their own armed security forces, so they are dependent upon local law enforcement response times in a crisis.

Six states – Utah, Colorado, Oregon, Kansas, Mississippi and Wisconsin – currently permit qualifying individuals to possess a firearm on public college and university campuses. Since becoming legal in these states, a lawfully possessed firearm has not been used to commit a

felony on a campus. I believe that the sometimes frenzied testimony against this bill is causing us to lose sight of the real issue at stake, namely, the right of all individuals to defend themselves against an armed assailant, and even protect others when necessary. To see the Idaho Constitution in full, click [here](#).

Representative Fred Wood

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Senate Bill 1224, as amended, has been working its way through the legislative process. This legislation is a culmination of more than a decade of efforts to transform the Behavioral Health System of Care. It has been under development for more than two years, working closely with stakeholders across the state, including : National Alliance for Mental Illness, all existing Regional Mental Health Boards and Regional Advisory Committees on substance use disorders, the Idaho Judiciary, the Department of Correction and Juvenile Corrections, just to name a few.

This is a long bill, but largely accomplishes four important goals. These goals were recommended by the WICHE report that was commissioned by the legislature, were also recommended by the Governor's Transformation Task Force, and indentified by the Mental Health Interim Committee of the Legislature's Health Care Task Force. The goals are as follows:

1. Follow industry best practices by integrating the mental health and substance abuse systems into a single behavioral health delivery structure
2. Allow for local control and responsibility over segments of the system that would otherwise remain state responsibilities
3. Align the statute with current practice
4. Prepare the behavioral health system for what we all hope are positive and necessary changes to the health care system in Idaho

This legislation has Governor Otter's support. There would be a Community Resource Development Specialist in each region whose position is specifically designed to do the work envisioned in this legislation for the Regional Behavioral Health Board to complete. This legislation does not require new appropriation of personnel. It reduces state government by providing the opportunity for communities to more efficiently and effectively organize and provide the supportive services that are already being organized and provided by the Department of Health and Welfare. It is important for communities to have "skin in the game" when it comes to behavioral health care and this legislation provides the structure for that to exist. To read more about this bill, click [here](#).

Senator Dean Cameron

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This last week the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) was extremely busy as we finalized the state budget. I'd like to spend my time discussing our most important budget item because nearly 50% of the state revenue was spent on Monday as we approved the Public Schools' budget. Since the financial downturn which began in 2008, all state budgets were reduced significantly, some as high as 25%. Although we protected public schools, even they were eventually reduced slightly as our reserves and stimulus ran dry. It is important to recognize that even in years when we were able to "protect" public schools, we were "protecting" them from a decrease. They did not see an increase in spite of their increasing enrollment. This year was much different; we were able to substantially increase the budget for public schools. This is the best Public School's budget since 2008. Although we still have some work to do to restore where we once were and account for growth, I am pleased with the outcome.

After much behind-the-scenes negotiating, JFAC approved a 5.1% increase of \$66.2 million from the General Fund, which is almost \$29 million more than the Governor's recommendation. Here are some of the important provisions of that budget:

- Teacher compensation: A 3.8% increase in what the state pays to local school districts for teacher compensation, including 1% in the base salary and minimum salary, plus \$15.8 million for leadership awards decided at the local level, and an additional 1.42% statutory boost on the minimum teacher salary bringing it to \$31,750.
- Professional development: \$12.15 million for continued training for teachers, including \$9.4 million for Idaho Core Standards, gifted and talented education or counseling. The remaining \$2.7 million would provide teacher training through coaches in each region.
- Technology: \$13.4 million, including \$8 million to improve classroom technology, \$2.25 million to continue installing wireless Internet in high schools, \$3 million for a second year of technology pilot projects and \$150,000 for an online course portal.
- School safety and security: \$2.2 million for districts for Safe and Drug-Free School programs.
- Content and curriculum: \$4 million in one-time money for instructional content or curriculum.

With Appreciation

Thank you all for the opportunity to serve our legislative district and state. It is truly a privilege that we greatly appreciate and do not take for granted. Please feel free to share your thoughts, ideas, or suggestions by emailing us or calling our offices. Often the best ideas come from constituents, like you. Please feel free to share this newsletter with others. If they would like to be added to our mailing list please send us an email.

Thank you,



Scott Bedke
District 27
Idaho State Legislature



Fred Wood



Dean Cameron