



DISTRICT 27 e-NEWSLETTER – March 4, 2014

The Idaho State Legislature continues to work toward a late March sine die. This means much less new legislation being introduced, as existing bills work their way through both bodies.

Speaker Scott Bedke

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Two separate pieces of legislation passed the House this week, both of which affect the well-being of many citizens in our area of the state. Because both of them have an impact on agriculture, although in very different ways, I thought you should know more about each of them.

This past week House Bill 470 passed the House and moved to the Senate for consideration. As the wolf population in Idaho has increased, its negative impact on Idaho's agricultural interests has also increased. This legislation creates a Wolf Control Fund and a State Board to direct and manage the fund. The Governor has recommended a one-time \$2 million allocation from the General Fund, and fees from sportsmen and livestock industries will also be deposited into the fund. This money will be used for wolf control measures when there is depredation conflict between wolves and livestock or wildlife. Although there was considerable debate against the bill on the House floor, it passed on a vote of 49-16. This is important and necessary legislation with implications to our area of the state, where so many people are involved in ranching and farming. This bill is one effort to better protect sheep and cattle populations in Idaho from depredation by wolves. To read more about this topic, click [here](#) and to see the bill in full, click [here](#).

Another topic that has received a lot of coverage on both sides is the ag security bill. Senate Bill 1337 protects agricultural producers from interference by those who unlawfully enter production facilities for the purpose of disrupting the operation. The bill designates such interference as a misdemeanor crime and fixes punishment of fine or imprisonment, or both, plus restitution of damages. After its passage by the Senate, a lengthy public hearing on SB 1337 was conducted by the House Agricultural Affairs Committee last week; following extensive testimony from both supporters and opponents, the bill was approved by the Agricultural Affairs Committee, 13-1, and sent to the House Floor for a vote. The bill was passed by the House on a vote of 56-14. Those of us who supported SB 1337 pointed out that it protects private property rights against those who would enter production facilities illegally and uninvited. Opponents of the bill frame their objections in terms of free speech rights and place the focus on humane treatment of farm animals. None of us who are involved in agricultural production ever condone mistreatment of animals in any way. It would be foolish of us to mistreat the animals

upon which we depend for our livelihood. We do need the ability to carry out our operations without the threat of undue interference from those who seek to shut us down, and who sometimes resort to extreme measures to do so. This legislation helps afford us that protection. To read this bill in full, click [here](#).

Representative Fred Wood

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This week the House Health and Welfare Committee addressed a number of RSs which will later be printed as bills.

1. RS2297, this would replace HB 520 which related to hospitals and included language about perpetual funding. Rather, it should be money that is subject to the department budget and should be an appropriation by JFAC.
2. RS 2298 would replace HCR 39 and relates to hospital databases. There does not need to be an all-payer claims database; instead a distributed health database would be better. This has already gone before the House, and this small change improves the Resolution.
3. RS 22918 Bond Issuance: currently the Idaho Attorney General (AG) has to sign off for many bonds that the office is not intricately involved in. If this RS passes, county housing authority, state institution of higher education, and city housing authority would no longer need the AG's sign-off. The way business is conducted today it is not necessary for the Attorney General to be involved in this process.
4. RS 22978 Video Voyeurism: if this bill passes, it would prohibit the use of sexual images for purposes of revenge, extortion, etc. It provides for extra protection in a digital age to prevent damage arising from unintended uses of the imagery.
5. RS 23002 Life Insurance: this would be a small change; before a life insurance policy is terminated, the policy holder must first be notified by certified mail. It would be optional for the insured parties to choose if they do or do not want this notification.
6. RS 23005 SNAP benefits: If this bill passes it would allow the Department of Health and Welfare to stagger the food stamp issue dates. Many federal aids are also released the same day, and this would allow for a ten consecutive day issuance period.
7. RS 22977C1 Naturopathic Medicine: It proposes to repeal existing statutes and would mandate licenses are needed only for those who consider themselves a doctor in their field. For example, if you used air, heat, water or light as treatment you do not need a license, but rather a simple registration. A board would be created that would oversee this, and an accredited school is needed for certification. This would come into effect on July 1, 2015, at which point a licensing exam would be required. For dates prior to July 1, 2015, members would be grandfathered in to this system.

Senator Dean Cameron

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As many of you have heard, we are grappling with a difficult and complex issue surrounding the Idaho Education Network (IEN). This program helps connect all of our high schools across the state and gives them the internet access needed to help our kids get the best class variety available. As I mentioned in a

previous newsletter, the IEN has not been receiving payments from federal FCC partners that are essential for the program to exist. In an effort to keep this program running for our high school children, the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee has passed a motion that would allocate \$6.6 million to the IEN to help them cover last year's services, as required by law. Unfortunately, the IEN is \$14.45 million short due to the lack of federal money being released. The Department of Administration has already spent \$550,000 of its budget, but clearly it is not enough. To complicate matters the federal funds are being withheld pending an investigation into the contracts issued. This matter is before the courts after the Supreme Court ruled that the Department of Administration inappropriately entered into a contract with ENA (Education Networks of America) and Century Link after announcing the contract was being awarded to ENA and Syringa Wireless.

I expressed concern four years ago, however, today I have the responsibility of finding a solution that meets the law, protects the taxpayer and does not harm the education of our kids. The first step was to pay the \$6.6 million, with very strict guidelines. The second step is being negotiated and considered by legal counsel. Hopefully it will be resolved by the next newsletter. This is a serious problem that I am committed to working on because our children deserve access to this program. It allows them better opportunities that will help them later in any kind of higher education. To read more about the IEN issues, click [here](#).

JFAC also passed additional funding for agriculture education or the FFA programs. This is a 46% increase and would allow for more students to get a better ag-science education. This is important because the number of students in this field continues to grow, and this profession makes up a large percent of Idahoans' livelihoods. Our local FFA advisors and students did a great job in advocating the needs. While there is never enough money to support all the departments that are worthy of more funding, we felt this adjustment was needed. To read more about agriculture funding, click [here](#).

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