

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 17, 2022

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Thayn, Vice Chairman Lent, Senators Den Hartog, Crabtree, Woodward, Blair (Johnson), Cook, Ward-Engelking, and Nelson

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Thayn** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:01 p.m.

S 1319 **Senator Nelson**, presented **S 1319** where the objective is to enable schools to utilize federal funds from the Infrastructure Act, which appropriates monies for clean and low emission school busses over the next four years. Some of the school districts that contract with a third party for their bus services cannot accept access to the funding because of Idaho code restrictions that restricts contracts to no longer than five years. **Senator Nelson** stated that **S 1319** will allow school districts to apply for a grant to access the funding, and sign a second contract. **Senator Woodward** asked about the application of electric school buses in rural areas, considering that a bus is lighter in weight and travels shorter distances. **Senator Nelson** stated that school bus manufacturers have several different battery configurations ranging from 80 to 200 plus mile ranges. Additionally, a 40 amp charger will provide a full charge overnight. **Senator Blair** asked if there would be any safety issues for an electric bus to provide heat in a snowstorm. **Senator Nelson** explained that an option is available to have a secondary heat source that is fuel oil driven. **Senator Cook** asked if the State Board of Education (SBOE) had been approached regarding changing the current contracts from five years to greater than five years. **Senator Nelson** stated that the State Department of Education (SDE) had been contacted, and the school bussing division is in support of **S 1319**. He also stated that a majority of school districts that own their own bus will not need this bill, only districts that are contracting with a third party. (See Attachment 1)

TESTIMONY: **Holly Condie**, Conservation Voters for Idaho, is in support of **S 1319**, she stated that electric school buses have a great return on investment and better for the air quality.

Andy Grover, Executive Director of the Association of School Administrators, is in support of **S 1319**, he stated that it is extremely difficult to budget for fuel when you have no control over the price increases.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **S 1319** to the floor with a do pass recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

SCR 118

Senator Crabtree presented **SCR 118** which is a concurrent resolution that encourages the schools of Idaho to present children with the knowledge, strength and virtue of a free people by reviewing the history both clearly and wholly, and not only the offenses but of the triumphs.

Senator Ward-Engelking expressed concern about the purpose of the resolution considering the statement that divisive content is appearing in school curriculum across the nation, as well as theories taught under critical race theory, however these have not been seen in Idaho. **Senator Crabtree** explained that the intent is to look at this from a global perspective, and to call attention to it.

Elaine King, Idaho Parents for Educational Choice, is in support of SCR 118, due to maintaining a diverse, inclusive, and equitable society.

Senator Nelson expressed concern over the definition of divisive content. **Senator Crabtree** explained that the key to this resolution is that therefore be it resolved and whereas those that are put in there to describe the thought process and which you may or may not agree.

Senator Ward-Engelking commented that this resolution seems to indicate that divisive content is being taught in the classroom.

Senator Lent asked for clarification on what the progression has been for the state of Idaho regarding teaching history of the United States. **Senator Crabtree** explained that in the past, legislation has been presented that prohibits spending money on critical race theory issues, and currently, the push is in the direction of protecting freedoms. (See Attachment 1)

MOTION: **Senator Lent** moved to send **SCR 118** to the floor with a do pass recommendation. **Senator Cook** seconded the motion. **Senators Ward-Engelking and Nelson vote Nay**. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

INTRODUCTION: Senate Education Page Graduation: Fischer Alt. Mr. Alt expressed his gratitude for learning about communications, and connections.

Senator Cook asked advice on how to get more high school students to enroll in the page program. **Mr. Alt** responded that a video ad to the schools and a day at the Idaho Capitol may be helpful.

Senator Crabtree expressed his appreciation for **Mr. Alt**, as an expert judge of character.

Senator Den Hartog inquired what the most surprising things that Mr. Alt had learned or experienced. **Mr. Alt** explained that it has been the people that have surprised him the most.

Senator Blair asked Mr. Alt a follow-up question regarding an educational video on drums, what his future plans are, and finally what university he will be attending, **Mr. Alt** explained that first, the video guidance was helpful. Second, that he would like to become a businessman (possibly a senator), travel the world, and climb mountains. Lastly, he would like to attend the University of Idaho.

Senator Nelson asked more information on Boy's State, and how that affected his life plans. **Mr. Alt** explained that it provided opportunities and made many friends.

Senator Nelson requested that Mr. Alt research how many Boys' State members are in the Capitol.

Chairman Thayn expressed appreciation and high hopes for Mr. Alt's future.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, Chairman Thayn adjourned the meeting at 3:39 p.m.

Senator Thayn
Chair

Katy Morden
Secretary