

MINUTES
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, January 13, 2022
TIME: 9:00 A.M.
PLACE: Room EW40
MEMBERS: Chairman Crane, Vice Chairman Armstrong, Representatives Palmer, Barbieri, Holtzclaw, Monks, Scott, Andrus, Young, Furniss, Hanks, Skaug, Gannon, Mathias
**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Reps. Gannon, Barbieri, Holtzclaw, Monks
GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of the session, the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

Chairman Crane called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Chairman Crane reviewed the committee rules.

RS 29116: **Rep. Ehardt** presented **RS 29116**, which will change the manner in which school board trustees fill vacated positions caused by a recall. Currently, the Board can choose who would permanently fill the vacated seat and this could negatively impact the community as the permanent trustee has not been voted into position. **RS 29116** states that if a regularly scheduled election date is coming within 90 days of a successful recall, the vacated position should remain open until the election, which allows candidates to run for the seat. If the election is further than 90 days away, the vacated trustee position can be filled by the School Board or Board of County Commissioners as a temporary position only and the permanent seat will be decided by the voters at the next possible election cycle.

In response to committee questions, **Rep. Ehardt** said this proposed change had been presented to the public and had received no opposition. The reason it was not already in place was the proposed legislation was presented late in an earlier session and had to be pushed to a later date. In response to additional committee questions, Rep. Ehardt confirmed the proposed legislation would not impact the General Fund and that the specified time frames of 90 days would be updated to reflect the updated specified time frames in current legislation.

MOTION: **Rep. Hanks** made a motion to introduce **RS 29116**. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

RS 29134: **Rep. Troy** presented **RS 29134** which provides a designated process for absentee ballot assistance to persons in nursing care facilities. Rep. Troy stated that Idaho's fast-growing aging population will see an increase of problems in ensuring a secure voter process for residents of care facilities and that additional support is needed in designating non-partisan, trained assistance to this demographic. Three authorized methods of support would be enacted: A volunteer trained in non-partisan assistance would be available through the County Clerk's office by request of the absentee voter or the resident's care facility; the County Clerk's office can request one volunteer from each recognized political party in Idaho to jointly meet with and assist the absentee voter, or an immediate family member of the absentee voter can assist them.

In response to committee questions, **Rep. Troy** reiterated there would be minimal to no extra cost for this policy as the County Clerk's office already utilizes volunteers for election needs, and existing training syllabi provided to these volunteers can encompass providing non-partisan assistance to the elderly or other nursing care residents. In response to follow up questions, Rep. Troy explained that the County Clerk's office would be responsible for finding volunteers within the community.

Committee members commented with concern that the bill did not address how the process might be handled in instances where the absentee voter was having issues with memory loss or cognitive functioning, and they could envision potential conflicts of interest sending affiliated persons to help. **Rep. Troy** stated that while we can't legislate "bad behavior," we should try to help in the ways that we can by offering non-partisan options, and this process would prevent direct partisan influence so the three established assistance options are in place as law and candidates, staffers, or other persons attempting to influence or direct the absentee voter towards a specific candidate would be facing misdemeanor charges.

Committee members commented that they wanted to make sure the definition of immediate family is established in the bill.

MOTION: **Rep. Palmer** made a motion to introduce **RS 29134** without the Emergency Clause verbiage.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: **Rep. Skaug** made a **substitute motion** to introduce **RS29134** with the following changes: to add Idaho Code Title 26 Ch. 31 page 303 line 4 (2631-303(4) to page 1, line 35 to define "Immediate Family."**Substitute Motion carried by voice vote.**

RS 29131: **Rep. Troy** presented **RS 29131** which would standardize the deadline for any unaffiliated voters to choose and register an affiliation by the candidate filing deadline. This would eliminate the ability to change to a different party or become unaffiliated instead of allowing changes any time up to and including the primary election day. There is minimal to no cost associated with this change.

MOTION: **Rep. Andrus** made the motion to introduce **RS 29131**. **Motion was carried by voice vote.**

Chairman Crane assigned **Rep. Young** and **Rep. Mathias** as proofreaders for committee minutes and Sub-Committees were still to be determined.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Representative Crane
Chair

Rebecca Fisk
Secretary