

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 08, 2024

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Okuniewicz, Vice Chairman Den Hartog, Senators Winder, Hart, Carlson, Toews, Trakel, Rabe, Just

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 Okuniewicz** called the meeting of the Senate Transportation Committee (Committee) to order at 1:30 P.M.

Chairman Okuniewicz explained that due to a long agenda and limited time, all RSs on agenda would be introduced to the committee first followed by **H 413** due to presenter schedules.

RS 31296, RS 31199, RS 31175, RS 31292, RS 31176 **RS 31296 RELATING TO DISABLED VETERAN LICENSE PLATES, RS 31199 RELATING TO THE IDAHO BROADBAND DIG ONCE AND RIGHT-OF-WAY ACT, RS 31175 RELATING TO MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION - to provide for the State Board of Education don't tread on me license plates. To establish a firearms safety grant fund and program for firearms safety education, RS 31292 RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF HIGHWAYS AND PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY, RS 31176 RELATING TO SPECIAL LICENSE PLATE PROGRAMS.**

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to introduce **RS 31296, RS 31199, RS 31175, RS 31292, RS 31176**. **Senator Toews** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

H 413 **TRANSPORTATION - Amends existing law to provide that license plates do not automatically expire after ten years and may continue to be used while still legible. Senator Den Hartog** introduced **H 413** to the committee for consideration. **Senator Den Hartog** stated the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) had brought forth this legislation as a cost saving measure to the people of Idaho to remove the ten year automatic replacement of license plates. **Senator Den Hartog** also stated the department regularly received calls from people who had received new license plates in the mail, even though their existing plates were still readable, while some individuals mistakenly discarded the new plates, unaware they were automatically sent every ten years. **Senator Den Hartog** also stated **H 413** did not change existing license plate enforcement methods, but when a license plate became unreadable, law enforcement agencies like the sheriffs and Idaho State Police could address the issue with the driver or vehicle owner.

TESTIMONY:

John Taylor, Idaho Heritage Trust, spoke in opposition to **H 413**. **Mr. Taylor** introduced himself to the committee and gave an overview of what the relationship of the Idaho Heritage Trust Fund was with the State. **Mr. Taylor** stated the Idaho Heritage Trust owned the copyright design and the trademark to the Idaho license plate and, the Trust received royalties for each set of license plates sold. **Mr. Taylor** also said the funds were mandated by statute to be used for restoration of historic buildings and other projects in Idaho and with the removal of the required replacement license plates the funds in the Trust account would decrease.

Chairman Okuniewicz asked was there an overall sum for each initial plate purchased. **Mr. Taylor** stated it was fifty cents per plate over ten years at issuance. **Chairman Okuniewicz** and **Senator Rabe** asked **Mr. Taylor** specific questions regarding revenues, budgets, and revenue sources for the organization. **Mr. Taylor** stated the fund could lose forty percent and \$406,000 came to the trust in revenue from the license plate program.

Pursuant to Senate Rule 39 (h), **Senator Just** disclosed he suggested the idea to form the Idaho Heritage Trust Centennial Commission and had a vested interest in the organization.

TESTIMONY:

Andy Creech, Idaho Sheriffs Association, spoke in opposition to **H 413**. **Mr. Creech** stated the main concern revolved around the durability of license plates, which are observed to lose reflectiveness and sometimes curl up within ten years. **Mr. Creech** expressed the worry that if there was not a mandatory renewal requirement after a decade, people may neglect to replace their plates when there was nothing to prompt the replacement. **Mr. Creech** also stated reflective plates played a crucial role in drawing attention to parked vehicles in the dark, enhancing safety.

DISCUSSION:

Brian Goeke, policy manager, Idaho Transportation Department, (Department) introduced himself to the committee and provided background information on the work the Department did to prepare this legislation. **Senator Just** asked if the license plate design was long term. **Mr. Goeke** stated it was in one statute to be red, white, and blue and the other statute reaffirmed the Heritage Trust trademark.

Senator Rabe asked for clarification of the concern of the loss of reflectivity on the plates for safety. **Mr. Goeke** stated the manufacturer warranty was only good for five years, but when maintained could last for a longer period of time. **Chairman Okuniewicz** asked when was it required to replace any regular license plate. **Mr. Goeke** reported the replacement would happen every ten years on your renewal notice. This would happen to all plates not just specialty plates, and this legislation would eliminate the ten year renewal of all plates.

Senator Just stated he was opposed to **H 413** due to the safety concerns and wanting to keep the Heritage Trust fully funded. **Senator Hart** made the comment the system worked well as it is and people have chosen to voluntarily participate in the purchase of the specialty plates that raise money for worthy organizations. **Senator Winder** asked if there could be an amendment done to exclude the specialty plates. **Senator Den Hartog** stated due to the royalty payment to the Idaho Heritage Trust and its trademark design to all plates, the amendment could not be made.

Senator Toews expressed concern for individuals who would save money if their plate was not worn out, but could also understand potential unintended consequences for other agencies and organizations. **Senator Toews** stated he was good with the motion to hold in committee to make a decision at a later date.

MOTION: **Senator Hart** moved to hold **H 413**. **Senator Just** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

H 412 **TRANSPORTATION - Amends existing law to provide for the use of technology and procedures to allow vehicles that meet established criteria to lawfully bypass a port of entry. Brian Geoke, policy manager, ITD Mr. Geoke** stated **H 412** allowed trucks, if meeting the established criteria, to continue driving on the road and bypass fixed ports of entry to continue the flow of traffic. **Mr. Geoke** stated that in this proposal the language was left vague to accommodate the rapid advancements in technology and the department aimed to collaborate with the industry, and adapt to technological changes. **Mr. Geoke** also said the department initiated a pilot program to screen trucks for weight, registration, and tire anomalies at highway speeds, the system identified issues like deflated, overinflated, or mismatched tires, and during this pre-screening process it was believed to save the industry at least \$11 million annually.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Winder** commented this was a great program to keep trucking and commercial traffic moving through the state and addressed safety concerns simultaneously. **Senator Winder** also stated it would keep people safe during travel and reduce transportation costs for companies delivering products.

MOTION: **Senator Winder** moved to send **H 412** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Rabe** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

H 414 **MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVER'S LICENSES - Amends existing law to revise provisions regarding commercial driver's license permit fees, eligibility, and renewal. Senator Toews** presented **H 414** to the committee and stated this legislation was a rewrite to promote readability and transparency with no change to fees or distributions. **Senator Toews** stated the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) had been focused to provide incentives for citizens to skip the trip and go online and the incentive would provide a \$5 discount to renew driver's license online. **Senator Toews** said this would allow all CDL drivers to have the option to renew online for eight years. Additionally, **Senator Toews** said the drug and alcohol clearinghouse was a federal requirement which was implemented for all states to comply by November 2024 and this clearinghouse would be where employers would report drug test results of CDL licensed employees. **Senator Toews** also said by moving renewals to online Sheriff offices there would be a decrease in foot traffic and revenues, but **H 414** would yield an estimated \$900,000 savings to Idaho citizens.

Senator Winder made the comment that although there were fees in this legislation there was no change in the existing fees. **Senator Toews** responded that was correct.

TESTIMONY: **Andy Creech**, Idaho Sheriffs Association spoke in opposition to **H 414**. **Mr. Creech** stated offices will still have the same overhead regardless if there is less foot traffic for driver's license renewals. **Mr. Creech** stated the main concern would be with the loss of revenue that will not cover the departments overhead costs.

DISCUSSION: **Chairman Okuniewicz** asked **Mr. Creech** how much his department would stand to lose. **Mr. Creech** responded he did not have time to review for an exact dollar amount, but the money that was already coming in was not enough to fully fund issuing driver's licenses.

Senator Winder stated he would like to see other innovative ways to replace the loss of revenue to sheriffs departments. **Senator Winder** stated he would support the bill for now. **Senator Trakel** commented police departments all over Idaho were seeing a loss of revenue and most are almost fully funded by city property tax. **Senator Trakel** expressed his concern that the loss of revenue would shift to the property owners. **Senator Den Hartog** stated while initiatives have benefited citizens in terms of cost and time savings it had impacted local government agencies and the committee acknowledged more alternatives need to be addressed to support these departments and maintain services expected by citizens.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **H 414** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Rabe** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Senator Trakel** asked to be recorded as voting nay.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Okuniewicz** adjourned the meeting at 2:42 P.M.

Senator Okuniewicz
Chair

Alicia Fowler-Rynearson
Secretary