

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 20, 2024

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

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

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Just

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 stated **RS 31310** was moved to another committee and had the new page introduce himself.

INTRODUCTION: **New Page Cameron Spencer. Mr. Spencer** introduced himself to the committee and stated he was home schooled with the rest of his five siblings. He also stated Senator Winder sponsored him and helped him with the application process. **Senator Den Hartog** asked where he was in the line up of his siblings and what his future plans were. **Mr. Spencer** said he was number two and his older sister was a page last year in this same committee and had four younger brothers. **Senator Carlson** welcomed Mr. Spencer to the committee and gave him her full support. **Senator Winder** followed up on a question Senator Den Hartog had asked wanting to know Mr. Spencer's future plans. **Mr. Spencer** stated he wanted to possibly work before going to college and was thinking about something computer related or Christian ministry.

S 1365 DRIVER'S LICENSES - Adds to existing law to establish a next of kin database and a procedure for next of kin to be notified in the event of certain emergency situations. Senator Harris stated due to concerns from county coroners offices across the State, this bill proposed a solution that would involve establishing a next of kin database within the Department of Motor Vehicles in the case of a person's death. **Senator Harris** stated this database would help coroners contact next of kin in a quicker manner.

TESTIMONY: **Torey Danner**, Bannock County Coroner and Vice President, Idaho State Coroner Association. **Mr. Danner** pointed out during death investigations there was a limited number of tools to notify the next of kin in the event of a death. **Mr. Danner** stated there was no database that provided a current address or phone number of contact which prolonged the process of finding a next of kin. **Mr. Danner** stated a way to solve the issue was to utilize the driver's license and ID card system which already had a built-in maintenance mechanism prompting at the time of renewal to also review and update next of kin information.

Chairman Okuniewicz asked if there would be an opt-out option to refuse providing the information. **Mr. Danner** responded that there would be the option to opt out.

- TESTIMONY:** **Kelli Brassfield**, Idaho Association of Counties, spoke in favor of **S 1365**. **Ms. Brassfield** stated the organization felt it necessary to support coroners with this bill to expedite services to families. **Ms. Brassfield** also stated the Sheriffs Association had been contacted and they were also in support of **S 1365**.
- TESTIMONY:** **Michael Johnson**, Chief Deputy Coroner, Boise County, spoke in favor of **S 1365**. **Mr. Johnson** provided the committee with personal experiences of his work with law enforcement and coroners. **Mr. Johnson** stated as changes have been happening, it had been a challenge to notify families in the case of a death. **Mr. Johnson** stated he has seen a lack of information in people's wallets, but acknowledged the public's hesitancy in giving more personal information to authorities, however, there was a benefit to all in these cases.
- Senator Hart** commented that with the resources of the internet it was still difficult to find a next of kin. **Mr. Johnson** stated even with social media and smart phones, depending on the circumstance, it could still be difficult to find someone.
- TESTIMONY:** **Daniel Murphy**, representing himself, spoke in favor of **S 1365** stating appreciation for what coroners did for the public and felt this would be a good way for law enforcement and coroners to find next of kin.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Harris** closed with his remarks and stated after hearing testimony today there were some areas where clean up of language would be appropriate and asked for the committee to send **S 1365** to the Fourteenth Order for possible amendments. **Senator Trakel** pointed out in section six the definition of next of kin applied to blood relatives and asked if in the case you were adopted you would not be excluded. **Senator Harris** stated no, this should not exclude those who were adopted.
- MOTION:** **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **S 1365** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Senator Toews** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- S 1321** **DISABLED VETERAN LICENSE PLATES - Amends existing law to provide that a disabled veteran may obtain disabled veteran license plates for up to two vehicles.** **Senator Okuniewicz** stated under the current Idaho code, disabled veterans were entitled to a single free license plate, however, if they owned two cars, there was no provision in place for obtaining a second free plate. **Senator Okuniewicz** stated after consulting with legislative attorneys, an efficient solution would be to allow a second set of plates for free without creating a new system for purchasing a second plate with little fiscal impact.
- Senator Rabe** asked if other specialty license plates were also eligible for a second vehicle. **Senator Okuniewicz** responded no, this would only apply to disabled veterans.
- TESTIMONY:** **Daniel Murphy**, representing himself, spoke in favor of **S 1321**. **Mr. Murphy** stated he was in full support of the bill, but had a concern of misuse by a family member or friend driving the vehicle and parking in a handicapped location. **Mr. Murphy** stated in these cases there was a \$100 fine and suggested a provision be made for a more substantial penalty. **Senator Okuniewicz** responded and stated another section of Idaho code addressed those penalties and that code would also apply to this legislation.
- MOTION:** **Senator Winder** moved to send **S 1321** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Hart** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Senator Trakel** disclosed that he was a disabled veteran, Pursuant to Senate Rule 39 (H).

S 1320

DESIGNATION OF HIGHWAYS AND PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY - Amends existing law to provide that certain maintenance of a public right-of-way shall not constitute upkeep or maintenance as a highway. Senator Toews stated this legislation aimed to provide highway districts more flexibility to assist first responders and promote safety. **Senator Toews** pointed out the current law discouraged highway districts from clearing snow or doing repairs on roads not in their systems as it may create a legal obligation for continued maintenance. **Senator Toews** expressed this legislation would seek to align the letter of the law by allowing common-sense exceptions for repairs and maintenance to assist first responders and be able to work with surrounding communities to solve issues without the pressure of legal obligation.

DISCUSSION:

Chairman Okuniewicz asked what did the legislation aim to avoid in the event of an emergency? Action was taken, for example, by plowing a road there could be an argument that the entity would be obligated to maintain it forever. **Senator Toews** responded this allowed highway districts to help maintain private rights-of ways without the legal obligation.

TESTIMONY:

Nick Veldhouse, Idaho Association of Highway Districts, spoke in favor of **S 1320**. **Mr. Veldhouse** stated highway districts built and maintained over 12,000 centerline miles of roads and bridges throughout Idaho and this legislation would help protect highway districts from having to add roads into their inventory to maintain due to an emergency event creating a potential prescriptive right of way.

MOTION:

Senator Hart moved to send **S 1320** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Trakel** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED:

There being no further business at this time, Chairman Okuniewicz adjourned the meeting at 1:57 p.m.

Senator Okuniewicz
Chair

Alicia Fowler-Rynearson
Secretary