

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 25, 2015

**TIME:** 3:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Keough, Nonini, Patrick, Souza, Den Hartog and Buckner-Webb

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Ward-Engelking

**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 Mortimer** called the meeting to order at 3:07 p.m.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT HEARING:** **David Hill** of Boise, Idaho, appointed to the State Board of Education to serve a term commencing July 16, 2014 and expiring July 1, 2017, presented his background and experience to the Committee. He outlined his education, work, and retirement experience. **Mr. Hill** said he is uniquely qualified and motivated to help the State address educational problems and issues.

**Senator Souza** asked him to expand on his comment regarding why the principles of policy making and resource allocation are a high priority. **Dr. Hill** explained that it is useful to focus on the principles that matter and to avoid getting lost in the details. It is important to step back and remember what is trying to be achieved. He remarked his philosophic statement for policy making in the public arena is to inquire about the principles that govern people.

**Vice Chairman Thayn** said that Mr. Hill has had an opportunity to work with the State Board of Education (SBE) for a few months and he wondered what his experience with them has been. **Dr. Hill** said it has been very interesting and filled with surprises. He explained his views regarding how well Idaho educates its youth with the limited resources. He spoke about progressive educational ideas and concluded that his management style is to sit quiet, learn the process, and then speak up.

**Chairman Mortimer** asked what areas of education Idaho should be working to improve. **Dr. Hill** stated his expertise leads him to be more interested in higher education. He believes there should be a seamless transfer of credits from community colleges to universities. He stated that the geography of Idaho lends it to having pockets of independence which can create coordination concerns amongst the institutions.

**PRESENTATION:** **Michelle Exstrom**, Program Director, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), presented information regarding the organization. She outlined the roles of NCSL at the state and national level. She spoke to the committee about three of the major policy areas that NCSL observed as hot topics: standards and assessment, student data privacy and teacher licensure. She explained each topic in detail and highlighted different policy actions states across the country are doing to remedy the issues (see attachment 1).

**Senator Souza** asked what in-state assessments are being used. **Ms. Exstrom** explained the many different tests used by a variety of states. The concern from Legislators is how do they know which is the best test to use and which will be a good assessment. The decisions are difficult because of the tests' newness.

**Chairman Mortimer** asked if there are other tests that will align with the common core and what are they. **Ms. Exstrom** answered in the affirmative. She explained which states are using tests other than the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC). **Ms. Exstrom** said the Fordham Institute, has been studying state standards and is working to determine what assessments will measure the knowledge and the skills of students.

**Chairman Mortimer** asked Ms. Exstrom to explain the discussion in regards to the who, why and how of testing. **Ms. Exstrom** explained in detail the process many states have been using to get better answers.

**Senator Nonini** asked if there are common threads between the states that have left the consortium. **Ms. Exstrom** answered in the affirmative and explained those as inflexibility, costs, and testing not in the best interest of students.

**S 1088:** **Karen Echeverria**, Executive Director, Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA) presented **S 1088**. This bill is a combination of two bills that have contained sunset clauses for the last two years: 1) reduction in force and 2) the ability to reduce a teacher's salary from one year over the next. She explained the process of how the bills were working and how they were combined. For the Committee's better understanding of this legislation, **Ms. Echeverria** reviewed, in detail, the changes (see attachment 2).

**MOTION:** **Senator Keough** said that she appreciated the many organizations working together to get this legislation refined. This is not an unusual process but it can be confusing. **Senator Keough** moved to send **S 1088** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed with **voice vote**.

**INTRODUCTIONS:** **Chairman Mortimer** recognized Representative Steve Smylie, Boise State University, and his 201 Education Civics class who were in the audience to observe legislation in action.

**S 1071:** **Senator Patrick** presented **S 1071**, in regard to passing a civics test in order to qualify for graduation from a secondary school. He explained there are other states that have passed this legislation and are requiring students to take the U.S. citizenship test in order to graduate from high school. He modeled this piece of legislation similar to many of those states.

**Senator Patrick** quoted "*Model Citizens*" by Robert Pondiscio, **The Education Gadfly**, January 21, 2015 (Vol.15, #3) <http://edexcellence.net/articles/model-citizens> as found on the website, <http://ww.marshallmemo.com/issue.php?l=cdb6b7af8f68e9c33d6e0822a119b3f8> to the Committee.

The reasons that were outlined in the blog, explained **Senator Patrick**, make citizenship knowledge very important. He then reminded the Committee that before STEM, social studies and current event courses were very important. Without some type of mandates for high school graduation, the next generation of students may be very ignorant of the founding of the U.S. **Senator Patrick** explained the fiscal impact and that the SBE would administer the rules.

**Senator Buckner-Webb** agreed that Idaho students should be able to pass the test. She believed they would possess great civic responsibility with the knowledge. She asked him to clarify the fiscal impact of the bill. **Senator Patrick** explained the cost would be minimum and would not impact the General Fund.

**TESTIMONY:** **Brenda Miller**, North West Professional Educators, testified in favor of **S 1071**. She explained that they surveyed the membership, and the majority are in favor of this requirement. They indicated this is a reasonable requirement for graduation (see attachment 3).

**Vice Chairman Thayn** asked if she knew the pass rate of this test for 7th graders. **Ms. Miller** said most scored poorly, however that led to great conversation and garnered an interest in learning more about their country.

**Rob Winslow**, Executive Director, IASA, said they are not in support of the high stakes testing of this bill. They do encourage citizenship courses (see attachment 4).

**Jonathan Parker**, Partner, Holland and Hart, represented his client, the Joe Foss Institute, in support of **S 1071**. He said he has fielded calls and emails which support the renewed interest in citizenship (see attachment 5).

**Vice Chairman Thayn** asked why Mr. Parker believed this should be a graduation requirement. **Mr. Parker** replied because it is already online, and it is an easy tool for students to use. He said if this is not requirement, what guarantee would there be that teachers would teach the information.

**Lori Gash**, Social Studies Coordinator, West Ada School District, stated that they cannot support **S 1071** because of the testing requirements. She presented the Committee information showing the current curriculum that indicates the district is already teaching the U.S. citizenship test material. She said there would be tremendous cost to implement the program (see attachment 6).

**Vice Chairman Thayn** asked how well the West Ada students would do if they took this test. **Ms. Gash** said the test is a tool that is used. It is just not required for high school graduation.

**Penny Cyr**, President, Idaho Education Association, stood in opposition of **S 1071**. The IEA is opposed to the use of high stakes testing for high school graduation. She asked that the legislators step back and recognize that high stake tests are having detrimental effects on students (see attachment 7).

**Senator Souza** asked Ms. Cyr if she had taken the test. **Ms. Cyr** replied in the negative. **Senator Souza** stated the test is not difficult. **Ms. Cyr** replied the IEA is against high stake tests that are tied to graduation.

**Phil McGrane**, Chief Clerk, Ada County, said that he oversees elections in the county and is in support of **S 1071**. He showed evidence of the decline in voter registration and voting. He concluded the lack of voting interest is due to the lack of civics knowledge. If students were to take the U.S. citizenship test, it could spark more interest in voting (see attachment 8).

**Karen Echeverria**, Executive Director, Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA), stood in opposition to **S 1071**. She outlined the two concerns with the bill: 1) the SBE decides the minimum courses to be taught in all public school and 2) the fiscal note is incorrect (see attachment 9).

**Senator Patrick** replied to the testimony. He said West Ada District is doing a good job in teaching civics; his concern was how many students could pass the U.S. citizenship test. He reiterated that many districts are using this test. **Senator Patrick** believed there are ways to work toward civic duty, and this test is a way to do that. He emphasized that implementation was not going to take much money. He said he made sure that local control was in the bill. He said that when problems are identified policy makers must work to remedy those. He sees this as a problem in citizenship and believes this bill will be the solution.

**Senator Nonini** asked if there has been conversation with the SDE and or the SBE in regard to this legislation. **Senator Patrick** replied that he had spoken with Tracie Bent, Chief Policy Officer, SBE, her suggestion was that the rulemaking for this legislation would be done by the SBE.

**Vice Chairman Thayn** said in the Idaho Constitution it addresses public education as being the reason for a republican form of government where people are educated to participate. He emphasized this topic should be taken up for discussion and questioned whether the citizens are well educated enough to pass the U.S. citizens test. His concern is that this would add more tests for graduation. **Vice Chairman Thayn** stated he would like to see more work on this legislation before moving forward.

**MOTION:** **Vice Chairman Thayn** moved to **hold S 1071** in committee. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** **Senator Souza** made a substitute motion to send **S 1071** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Patrick** seconded the motion.

**Senator Patrick** stated this legislation is popular across the U.S., and his constituents would like to see this enacted. This is in alignment with curriculum and should become legislation.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** **Chairman Mortimer** called for a roll call vote. **Senators Mortimer, Patrick, Souza and Den Hartog** voted aye. **Senators Thayn, Keough, Nonini and Buckner-Webb** voted nay. The substitute motion **failed**.

**ROLL CALL VOTE TO THE MOTION:** **Chairman Mortimer** called for a roll call vote on the motion to **hold S 1071** in Committee. **Senators Thayn, Keough, Nonini and Buckner-Webb** voted aye. **Senators Mortimer, Patrick, Souza and Den Hartog** voted nay. The motion failed.

**MOTION:** **Senator Patrick** moved to send **S 1071** to the 14th Order for amendment. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. **Senator Nonini** asked the maker of the bill what was the intention of the 14th Order. **Senator Patrick** replied there were not any specifics at this time.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** **Chairman Mortimer** called for a roll call vote. **Senators Mortimer, Thayn, Patrick, Souza and Den Hartog** voted aye. **Senators Keough, Nonini and Buckner-Webb** voted nay. The motion passed. **S 1071** will go to the 14th Order for possible amendment.

Due to the lateness of the day, **Chairman Mortimer** held **SCR 105** for future Committee assignment.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

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Senator Mortimer  
Chair

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LeAnn South  
Secretary