

MINUTES
HOUSE COMMERCE & HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 21, 2024

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW05

MEMBERS: Chairman Holtzclaw, Vice Chairman Bundy, Representatives Kingsley, Wisniewski, Weber, McCann, Cheatum, Hawkins, Healey, Miller, Price, Wheeler, Chew (Beazer), Roberts

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of session the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

Chairman Holtzclaw called the meeting to order at 1:31 pm.

MOTION: **Rep. Wheeler** made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2024, meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

H 558: **Rep. Skaug** presented **H 558**, aiming to enhance payout benefits in comparison to other progressive states, particularly focusing on personal benefits. Rep. Skaug has collaborated extensively with various stakeholders, including individuals and small, independent businesses across Idaho. Highlighting the endorsement from the Idaho Farm Bureau, Rep. Skaug underlines the complexity of the current system, which offers 17 benefits but ranks Idaho 47th among the rest of the states. An important facet of the bill addresses seasonal workers, extending eligibility to fourteen weeks with an additional two weeks if the employer permits. In the context of Idaho's urgent need for robust workforce, ranking second in the nation for job growth, Skaug stresses the significance of addressing barriers to workforce participation, especially in the aftermath of the epidemic. Rep. Skaug introduced **Rep. Young** to discuss the bill more in depth.

Rep. Young asserted that while the formula may seem intricate and require extensive numerical analysis, the proposed legislation is grounded in practical experience, aiming to benefit both small and large employers. Drawing on examples, she highlighted Iowa's successful return to work trend and Arkansas's recent extension of unemployment benefits from sixteen to twelve weeks in January 2024, alluding to the stability of their respective formulas. Addressing concerns about the financial sustainability of the program, Rep. Young points out that employers bear the responsibility of funding the unemployment benefits. The legislation also offers a balanced approach, leveraging past successes and maintaining financial prudence to support both workers and employers effectively.

Those speaking **in opposition** were **Shawn Keaough**, Idaho Loggers Association; **John Hughes**, AFL-CIO; **Ken Burgess**, Idaho Home Builders Association; **Jared Wise**, General Manager of Interstate Concrete and Asphalt; **Shawn Schupack**, Idaho Associated General Contractors. There is an issue with seasonal workers who will exhaust their unemployment benefits during their off season.

Those speaking **in support** were **Brian Sikma**, FGA. He stated this bill will create a larger benefit for all of Idaho and will keep Idaho from needing a federal bailout.

ORIGINAL MOTION: **Rep. Roberts** made a motion to **HOLD H 558** in committee.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Rep. Hawkins made a substitute motion to send **H 558** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Roll call vote was requested. **Substitute motion failed by a vote of 5 AYE and 9 NAY. Voting in favor** of the motion: Rep. Kingsley, Rep. Wisniewski, Rep. Hawkins, Rep. Healey, and Rep. Price. **Voting in opposition** to the motion: Rep. Bundy, Rep. Weber, Rep. McCann, Rep. Cheatum, Rep. Miller, Rep. Wheeler, Rep. Chew (Egbert), Rep. Roberts, and Chairman Holtzclaw.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON ORIGINAL MOTION: Roll call vote was requested. **Original motion carried by a vote of 9 AYE and 5 NAY. Voting in favor** of the motion: Rep. Bundy, Rep. Weber, Rep. McCann, Rep. Cheatum, Rep. Miller, Rep. Wheeler, Rep. Chew (Egbert), Rep. Roberts, and Chairman Holtzclaw. **Voting in opposition** to the motion: Rep. Kingsley, Rep. Wisniewski, Rep. Hawkins, Rep. Healey, and Rep. Price.

H 481: Rep. Andrus presented **H 481**, which he calls the Ghosting Bill. This legislation would define what qualifies as a "work search" activity unemployment claimants must engage in to receive unemployment insurance benefits. Specifically, this bill requires claimants to conduct five work searches per week to receive benefits instead of two per week as outlined by Administrative Rule. The final provision would prohibit the practice of "ghosting" an employer interview by unemployment insurance claimants and would require the Department to maintain an email address and web portal for employers to report claimant.

Those speaking **in opposition** were **John Hughes**, AFL-CIO. He talked about the good cause provision and exhaustion of benefits.

Those speaking **in support** were **Brian Sikma**, FGA. He stated there is flexibility in this bill.

ORIGINAL MOTION: Rep. Kingsley made a motion to send **H 481** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Rep. Roberts made a substitute motion to **HOLD H 481** in committee.

ROLL CALL ON VOTE ON SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Roll call vote was requested. **Substitute motion failed by a tie vote of 7 AYE and 7 NAY. Voting in favor** of the motion: Rep. Bundy, Rep. Weber, Rep. McCann, Rep. Cheatum, Rep. Wheeler, Rep. Chew (Egbert), and Rep. Roberts. **Voting in opposition** to the motion: Rep. Kingsley, Rep. Wisniewski, Rep. Hawkins, Rep. Healey, Rep. Miller, Rep. Price, and Chairman Holtzclaw.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON ORIGINAL MOTION: Roll call vote was requested. **Original motion failed by a tie vote of 7 AYE and 7 NAY. Voting in favor** of the motion: Rep. Kingsley, Rep. Wisniewski, Rep. Hawkins, Rep. Healey, Rep. Miller, Rep. Price, and Chairman Holtzclaw. **Voting in opposition** to the motion: Rep. Bundy, Rep. Weber, Rep. McCann, Rep. Cheatum, Rep. Wheeler, Rep. Chew (Egbert), and Rep. Roberts.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:58 pm.

Representative Holtzclaw
Chair

Jacobi Van Amburg
Secretary