

# NEWS RELEASE

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Office of Performance Evaluations  
Idaho Legislature  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 27, 2012

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Meeting Location: State Capitol, Capitol Auditorium  
Meeting Time: 4:30 p.m.

(BOISE) Today, the Legislature's independent, non-partisan Office of Performance Evaluations released three reports to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee:

- Operational Efficiencies in Idaho's Prison System (follow-up report)
- Establishing an Efficiency Commission (informational report)
- Coordination and Delivery of Senior Services in Idaho (follow-up report)

The reports are on the Office of Performance Evaluations' website:

<http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/ope/>.

The Oversight Committee also considered 8 evaluative topics for evaluation that were requested by legislators:

- Best practices for state contract management
- Analysis and comparison of Idaho's tax rates with other states
- State employee compensation models and employment barriers
- Impacts of EPA control and oversight of DEQ water programs
- Legislative oversight and coordination of state-funded technology infrastructure
- State law and policy comparisons for traditional and charter public schools
- Teacher recruitment, attrition, and retention in the state's K-12 public schools
- Foster care program of the Department of Health and Welfare

The eight-member Joint Legislative Oversight Committee is equally divided between the two political parties and the two chambers of the Legislature. Senator Elliot Werk (D) and Representative Clifford Bayer (R) co-chair the committee. Results of today's meeting are highlighted in the following pages.

## **Operational Efficiencies in Idaho's Prison System, Follow-up Report**

In a follow-up report released to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee today, the Office of Performance Evaluations reported that policymakers not only need to plan for added capacity to house the state's growing prison population but should also plan to modernize Idaho's prison infrastructure as those bed spaces are added. The office's initial review in 2010 ranked the efficiency of each of the state-operated prison and all of the housing units within each prison. The initial report identified several replacement options that would save the state money over the long term. These replacement options are increasingly important because of Department of Correction estimates that the state will be short 588 beds this year and more than 1,200 beds by 2015.

The follow-up report reiterated the findings from the initial review by stating that policymakers need to begin a long-term planning process that will replace inefficient, poorly designed housing units and support staffing standards. Adherence to such standards will improve the Department of Correction's ability to maintain safety and security in a cost-effective manner. Although the Department of Correction has updated their staffing plans since 2010, the department does not have enough staff to continuously observe all inmates in all housing units. The follow-up report stated that the department would be better positioned to provide continuous observation in modernized housing units.

### **Establishing an Efficiency Commission**

In March 2011, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee directed OPE to develop an action plan for Idaho to use should the state decide to establish an efficiency commission. An efficiency commission is one tool for finding ways to improve state government operations and identify cost savings. The report discusses Idaho's most recent effort to restructure government—the former Governor Kempthorne's 2020 Blue Ribbon Task Force, established in 2002. The legislative evaluators note that many of the task force's unimplemented recommendations may still be relevant and suggest that policymakers reassess the recommendations before deciding whether a new commission is needed.

### **Coordination and Delivery of Senior Services in Idaho, Follow-up Report**

An evaluation report released in 2011 had ten recommendations for the Idaho Commission on Aging and six area agencies on aging, and one for the Legislature.

The follow-up report released today highlights the work completed since the release of the initial evaluation. It found that the commission and the six area agencies have taken preliminary steps to implement several issues, and the area agencies have completed work to standardize reimbursement rates. Two regions had standardized reimbursement rates before the initial evaluation occurred, and since that time, the remaining four area agencies on aging have either standardized reimbursement rates or have reduced the level of variation for contracted providers within their areas.

The review noted, however, that more work needs to be done on a statewide level to help keep senior centers—the primary local access point for senior accessing nutrition programs—relevant and vibrant as Idaho's aging population continues to grow.

## Selected Evaluation Topics

The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee heard details about the following requests at today's meeting.

Representatives John Rusche, Fred Wood, and Jeff Thompson requested a study of **best practices for contract management**. Best practices could help the state develop a strong framework for contract development and management as well as vendor management, particularly since the state may be contracting soon for projects such as K–12 technology, Medicaid managed care, and health insurance exchange for Medicaid readiness.

Senator Tim Corder, on behalf of the Senate Local Government Committee, asked for a weighted quantitative **analysis of Idaho's tax rates** as compared with other states. He said an independent, objective comparison would help the committee determine whether Idaho companies can compete with other states.

Budget committee members Senator Joyce Broadsword and Representatives Marv Hagedorn, Wendy Jaquet, and Shirley Ringo asked for a study on executive branch **employee compensation and turnover**. They are concerned about the number of lost positions in the past four years and the number of employees leaving for higher paying jobs in the private sector. A study of best compensation models and a list of employment barriers could help the state effectively retain employees.

Speaker Denney, Senator Monty Pearce, Senator Jeff Siddoway, Representative Raybould, and Representative Andrus requested an evaluation of **EPA control and oversight of DEQ water programs**: water quality standards, total maximum daily loads, and permitting of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. A study would identify impacts to state sovereignty and control of its water resources, as well as the fiscal impacts and burdens on Idaho businesses and citizens.

Senate budget committee vice chair Senator Shawn Keough asked for an evaluation of the **state-funded technology infrastructure**. A study could determine whether the Legislature has appropriate oversight and whether planning and coordination exist to prevent duplicative efforts and ensure all areas of the state have access to the technology structure.

Senate budget committee vice chair Senator Shawn Keough requested a review of **state laws and policies for traditional and charter public schools**. A study could look at the differences and outcomes in statute, funding of facilities, and auditing standards between traditional schools and charter schools.

Senator John Goedde, on behalf of his Senate Education Committee, asked for a study of **teacher recruitment, attrition, and retention in the state's K–12 public schools**. A study could identify challenges and opportunities for recruitment and project future needs for educators.

Representatives Mike Moyle and Christy Perry requested a study of the **foster care program** at the Department of Health and Welfare. A study would identify the policies and procedures for placing children into foster care as well as removing children from foster care.

The committee will meet again in March to consider these requests and others, and assign evaluations to the Office of Performance Evaluations.