

MINUTES  
**SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Thursday, January 30, 2014

**TIME:** 1:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW53

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Brackett, Vice Chairman Johnson, Senators Keough, Winder, Rice, Nonini, Hagedorn, Bock and Buckner-Webb

**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 Brackett** called the meeting of the Senate Transportation Committee (Committee) to order at 1:35 p.m. and asked the secretary to take a silent roll. With a quorum present, **Chairman Brackett** welcomed everyone to the meeting, saying that the Committee would review two bills, **S 1227** and **S 1207**. **Chairman Brackett** welcomed Senator Heider to the Committee and asked him to present **S 1227**.

**S 1227** **Senator Heider** said it was a pleasure to stand before the Committee. On March 8, 1965, the first American combat troops, the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, waded ashore at China Beach, north of Da Nang. That was the beginning of the Vietnam conflict, or the Vietnam War. Ten years later, the United States was withdrawing from that location. One year later, in 1976, it became the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. During those ten years of fighting in Vietnam, 58,000 American troops were killed, and 217 brave Idaho men and women were among those who gave their lives in that conflict. **Senator Heider** believes it is only fitting that as Idahoans we celebrate the lives of those who made the ultimate sacrifice to their country. **S 1227** renames Idaho Interstate Highway I-84, located from the Oregon border to the Utah border, as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway. I-84 has already been so designated in the state of Oregon, from the center of Portland, where I-84 begins or ends, to the Idaho border. In North Idaho, we have Idaho's portion of the National Purple Heart Trail, Interstate Highway I-90 as it goes through Idaho. There are various veterans groups that would like to participate and co-fund this designation. In speaking with the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), there have been various cost estimates for new highway signs if this legislation passes. Using North Idaho's Purple Heart Trail as an example, their four-foot by five-foot signs that are attached to existing sign posts cost \$580 each. To plant free-standing signs costs about \$12,000 each. Depending on the funding received, the smaller signs will likely be displayed. They will be painted and erected by ITD. With that, **Senator Heider** thanked the Chairman and the Committee, he asked the Committee to send **S 1227** to the Senate floor with a do-pass recommendation and offered to stand for questions.

**Senator Rice** asked if there were other highways in Idaho named for veterans of specific wars. **Senator Heider** said he did not know of any, except for that portion of Interstate Highway I-90 located in North Idaho that is Idaho's portion of the National Purple Heart Trail. There were no other questions for Senator Heider.

**Chairman Brackett** asked if anyone in the audience wanted to testify regarding **S 1227**. There being no one, **Chairman Brackett** asked for a motion from the Committee.

**MOTION:** **Senator Hagedorn** and **Senator Winder** both mentioned that they are veterans of the Vietnam War. **Senator Hagedorn** moved that **S 1227** be sent to the Senate floor with a **do-pass** recommendation. **Senator Winder** seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous **voice vote**. **Senator Heider** said he would carry the bill on the Senate floor. Both **Senator Hagedorn** and **Senator Winder** offered their assistance during debate on the Senate floor.

**S 1207:** **Chairman Brackett** thanked Senator Heider and welcomed Sharon Kiefer, Deputy Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDF&G), to the Committee. He asked her to present **S 1207** to the Committee for consideration.

**Ms. Kiefer** said that **S 1207** changes two words in Idaho Code §49-417, which governs and authorizes three Idaho wildlife specialty license plates. Two are currently specified as an elk plate and a cutthroat trout plate. Because these plates fund an important component of IDF&G's wildlife management program (the wildlife diversity program), IDF&G is trying to be forward thinking with their partner, the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation, on how to best position the wildlife specialty license plate program to create a continued climate of strong interest and strong sales. IDF&G believes that the specific references to species of wildlife on the license plates limits opportunities for new designs and marketing.

Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 revenue from the sale of 52,581 transfers, renewals and new license plates was \$850,785 to the non-game trust account, \$22,363 to the Idaho Department of Agriculture livestock disease control fund, and \$14,257 to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation fund for non-motorized boating access.

**S 1207** replaces the wording 'elk wildlife special plate' with 'mammal wildlife special plate' and replaces 'cutthroat wildlife special plate' with 'fish wildlife special plate'. There is no other change to the statutory framework of the wildlife specialty license plates. The idea for the change came from many stakeholders interested in non-game species (e.g., those not hunted, fished or trapped), including many hunters, anglers and trappers. These stakeholders understand the importance of upholding state management and precluding threats. The elk plate is currently the most popular followed by the third license plate depicting the bluebird.

**Ms. Kiefer** offered the following hypothetical example of the process a customer would go through to change the design of their specialty license plate: A new cutthroat trout design is created and approved, but the customer has an existing cutthroat license plate that is two years old. At year six of the customer's license plate life, the customer would be notified that their license plate needs to be replaced (statute requires replacement every seven years). The customer could either renew their plate, getting the new cutthroat design, or transfer to a different specialty wildlife license plate, such as the bluebird plate. The same time duration applies for any new design creation, IDF&G creates a brook trout design or a sturgeon design.

**Ms. Kiefer** assured the Committee that any new designs suggested by the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation and/or IDF&G will be vetted by the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation Board and the public, and the design must meet ITD approval. She also assured the Committee that no wildlife species currently used on specialty license plates will be considered.

**Ms. Kiefer** concluded that there would be no fiscal impact to the general fund. This revision is a step in creating opportunity to bolster revenue from wildlife specialty plates. It does not directly affect current revenue to the non-game set-aside account or other accounts that receive revenue from wildlife specialty license plates. **Ms. Kiefer** said she would stand for questions.

**Senator Keough** wanted to know if people who currently have an elk or cutthroat license plate, and if a new design is developed, would they be able to continue with their old design or would it be eliminated. **Ms. Kiefer** said that if the person owned the license for less than seven years they could renew it. If they had it over seven years and a new design had replaced their plate's design, then their plate design would no longer be available. **Senator Keough** asked if there was any marketing research as to whether overall sales would decline because familiar designs were no longer available. **Ms. Kiefer** said that market research would play a big role in the process of retiring existing designs and implementing new designs. Although sales of the current cutthroat trout design are declining, there would not be a change if research showed no economic benefit. **Senator Keough** asked who pays the design costs. **Ms. Kiefer** said the cost is borne by the sponsoring organization or group and not ITD. She introduced Ms. Christine Fisher of ITD for additional clarification. **Ms. Fisher** said that the minimum charge for specialty license plate programming costs is \$1,000 which is paid by the sponsoring organization or group.

**Senator Nonini** asked if it was correct that if a specialty license plate does not meet a certain sales amount, they would cease to be available. **Ms. Kiefer** said that they have to meet a certain number sold for three consecutive years, but it has never been an issue with IDF&G specialty license plates. **Senator Nonini** asked if that was because they depict an elk or a cutthroat trout and if it was a new species isn't there a possibility it would not meet required sales standards. **Ms. Kiefer** assured the Senator that they would not embark on a new design endeavor if they were not assured of an increase in revenue. **Senator Nonini** asked why IDF&G was not asking for changes for the bluebird specialty license plate. **Ms. Kiefer** said the bluebird plate statute is not linked to any specific bird or mammal. **Senator Nonini** asked if the bluebird plate could be eliminated. **Ms. Kiefer** said that it would not, but it could become a plate for another type of bird.

**Chairman Brackett** asked if changing the bluebird plate to a new category of animal would require a change in statute. **Ms. Kiefer** said that IDF&G has discretion with the bluebird plate, but the goal is to have their three plates represent one of each: a bird, a fish and a mammal.

**Senator Hagedorn** asked if there has been discussion about using an elk plate for fundraising purposes. **Ms. Kiefer** said there had not, but that this is the funding mechanism for game in Idaho. It is important in raising funds. **Senator Hagedorn** said that elk and cutthroat trout are game animals, but the money raised from sale of these plates does not benefit game enthusiasts. He wanted to know why non-game animals are not used to benefit non-game activities. **Ms. Kiefer** said that hunters like the plates, but they have not indicated an interest in restricting how the funds are used. **Senator Hagedorn** stated that he appreciates that nearly \$900,000 annually benefits non-game activities. He has concerns with using game plates for non-game trusts and believes the funds should be placed in another account. **Ms. Kiefer** said that it states on the advertisement for the plates where the money is going. The customer has to take responsibility for reading what the sale of these plates benefit.

**Vice Chairman Johnson** said he had read the Statement of Purpose and suggested that with so many sports teams named after animals (e.g., the Steelheads, the Idaho Stampede, the Boise Hawks) that perhaps specialty license plates depicting sports teams could boost revenue. **Ms. Kiefer** said that the specialty license plate revenue is linked with the sale of automobiles. During the peak of the recession, automobile sales declined and so did the sale of specialty license plates. Research shows that once a customer purchases their first specialty license plate, they generally stay with the same program. It is important to have plate designs that keep the interest of customers. It is IDF&G's hope to reach \$1 million in revenue with the flexibility in design **S 1207** offers. **Vice Chairman Johnson** commented that marketing and design is not inexpensive and asked how these costs were covered. **Ms. Kiefer** said that the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation was the sponsoring nonprofit organization that would cover those costs. There were no further questions for Ms. Kiefer.

**MOTION:** With no others in attendance wishing to testify on this legislation, **Chairman Brackett** thanked Ms. Kiefer and asked the Committee for a motion. **Senator Hagedorn** moved to send **S 1207** to the amending order to add the word 'non-game' in front of the words 'mammal' and 'fish' for clarification purposes. There was no second for the motion. **Chairman Brackett** announced the motion had died in Committee for lack of a second.

**MOTION:** **Senator Bock** moved to hold **S 1207** in Committee. **Senator Rice** seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous **voice vote**.

**ADJOURNED:** With no further business before the Committee, **Chairman Brackett** adjourned the meeting at 2:02 p.m.

---

Senator Brackett  
Chair

---

Gaye Bennett  
Secretary