

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 18, 2015
TIME: 1:30 P.M.
PLACE: Room EW42
MEMBERS: Chairman Andrus, Vice Chairman Boyle, Representatives McMillan, Batt, Bell, Dayley, Miller, Romrell, VanOrden, Burtenshaw, Kerby, Troy, Pence, Erpelding
**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None
GUESTS: Douglas R. Jones, Growers for Biotechnology; Jim Lowe, Food Producers; Mitch Reyer, Food Producers; Patrick Kole, Idaho Potato Commission; Barbara Petty, University of Idaho; Mark Duffin, Idaho Sugarbeet Growers; Kim O'Neill, University of Idaho; Rick Waitley, Leadership Idaho Agriculture Class; Dennis Tanikuni, Idaho Farm Bureau.

Chairman Andrus called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

Chairman Andrus welcomed **Rick Waitley** and the 35th Leadership Idaho Agriculture Foundation class to the committee meeting. He invited them to introduce themselves and tell where they were from.

Rick Waitley, Leadership Idaho Agriculture, acknowledged **Rep. Miller** for receiving the prestigious Pat Takasugi Award at the Idaho Ag Summit earlier this month. The award recognizes individuals who have shown outstanding leadership in Idaho agriculture.

MOTION: **Rep. Erpelding** made a motion to approve the minutes of Friday, February 6, and Tuesday, February 10, 2015 meetings. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

H 114: **Rep. Kauffman** stated this proposed legislation clarifies the definition of three activities relating to agricultural seeds - cultivating, producing and processing which are among the activities that are regulated by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. The proposal is to have regulation remain with the State Department of Agriculture rather than local counties or cities.

Douglas R. Jones Grower of Biotechnology, spoke **in support** of the bill. He explained how in other states this has become a problem when counties that boarder each other have different regulations. In response to committee questions he explained this change would not deny individual rights to vote if they have a differing opinion but that the decisions if left to the State would be based on science rather than political decisions.

Mark Duffin, Idaho Sugarbeet Growers, spoke **in support**. He stated this seems necessary after seeing the problems it has caused in other states.

MOTION: **Rep. Romrell** made a motion to send **H 114** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Kauffman** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Brent Olmstead, Milk Producers of Idaho, reported to the committee concerning immigration. The Idaho Business Coalition for Immigration Reform was formed in 2008. The purpose for the coalition is to influence public policy on immigration issues on behalf of Idaho employers. H2A visa is for agriculture workers, allowing them to stay a maximum of 10 months.

Mr. Olmstead explained the President's Executive Action which would defer action for childhood arrivals, defers action for parents of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents and provides a provisional waiver for those of unlawful presence under extreme hardship, such as having no way to support themselves or their family in the country of origin. He stated the plan would modernize, improve and clarify immigrant and nonimmigrant visa programs. He stated it is a falsehood to think all migrant workers wish to become citizens. The majority of them want to work here 4 - 5 years and then return to their home countries better able to care for their families.

Mr. Olmstead stated that Idaho along with 25 other states filed a law suit to stop the President's executive order. He said it was not necessarily because of what it would do but because of the way the order was done.

Mr. Olmstead said the Magic Valley has an unemployment rate of 3.5%. There is a high demand for dairy workers but not enough available workers to fill those position. In response to committee questions he stated farm families have to decide whether to leave land unfurrowed or increase their own work load if guest workers are not available.

John C. Foltz, Dean of the College of Agriculture, University of Idaho, presented the annual report to the committee. He stated this was the fourth year of record highs in Idaho farm cash receipts. There are 11 research and extension agencies across the state serving 42 of the 44 counties and 3 Indian reservations. He stated growth comes from research and technology. In the past year there have been developments in new wheat varieties, canola or mustard varieties and improved varieties of grapes, peaches and apples. Since 2004 there has been several new varieties of potatoes developed. He spoke of the Universities contribution to the 4-H programs in Idaho. He stated over 56,000 youth participate in Idaho 4-H with over 5,000 volunteers in the program.

In response to committee questions regarding tracking of youth involved in 4-H programs, he said it is not tracked as close as he would like but research shows that 4-H members are more likely to attend college, make healthy choices and avoid risky behaviors.

In response to committee questions regarding joining with technology experts from other Idaho Universities in creating more innovation in agriculture such as irrigation and water management, **Mr. Foltz** stated they are reaching out and looking for investors to partner with in those areas.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:46 p.m.

Representative Andrus
Chair

Joan Majors
Secretary