

MINUTES  
**SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, January 19, 2016

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

**PLACE:** Room WW54

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Heider, Vice Chairman Nuxoll, Senators Hagedorn, Martin, Lee, Harris, Schmidt and Jordan

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Lodge

**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 Heider** called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. and welcomed everyone to this meeting of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee (Committee). **Chairman Heider** said there would be three gubernatorial appointments to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI or Commission), for which they will serve a three-year term.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Consideration of Gubernatorial Appointment of Allan R. Schneider to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.** **Chairman Heider** introduced Allan R. Schneider and thanked him for being at the Committee meeting. **Chairman Heider** asked Mr. Schneider to tell the Committee about himself and why he would like to be appointed to the Commission.

**Mr. Schneider** stated he has been a high school English teacher for 35 years and currently resides in Garden City. **Mr. Schneider** said he was about 30 years old when he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, which he said is a progressive disease. After gaining the courage to admit he needed help, he went to the CBVI's Assessment and Training Center (ATC) and took classes in mobility, Braille, assisted technology and daily living. The CBVI training changed his and his wife's lives. **Mr. Schneider** said he didn't realize how much his wife had been looking out for him; now, he is able to go to many places on his own. Serving on the CBVI board gives him the opportunity to give back to those people who helped him so much.

**Chairman Heider** thanked Mr. Schneider and called for questions.

**Senator Martin** asked Mr. Schneider how long he has served on the CBVI board. **Mr. Schneider** replied this would be his third confirmation hearing. **Senator Martin** asked what Mr. Schneider feels he and the board have accomplished while he's served on the Commission and what he would like the CBVI accomplish in the future. **Mr. Schneider** credits CBVI accomplishments to its staff. He mentioned how students praised the CBVI ATC and told the board it had changed their attitudes and lives. **Mr. Schneider** also mentioned that, even during budget cut struggles, he had only heard success stories from regional offices. He said he would want to continue to try and cultivate a culture in which people are with the CBVI to serve.

**Senator Hagedorn** asked Mr. Schneider what he sees as the greatest challenge before the Commission right now. **Mr. Schneider** said the answer was easy: The new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which has imposed many new regulations. **Mr. Schneider** stated one of the regulations requires 15 percent of their money to be spent on students transitioning from school to work. He said the regulations don't stipulate as to what types of expenditures are included in that 15 percent, such as contracting special teachers, transportation, books or computers. **Mr. Schneider** said that being asked to comply to the rule, without actually knowing included expenditures, is the board's greatest challenge. **Senator Hagedorn** inquired about the primary sources of funding for the Commission. **Mr. Schneider** responded that the CBVI received both federal and state funding.

**Senator Nuxoll** asked Mr. Schneider to elaborate on how the CBVI helped him to get around better. **Mr. Schneider** explained that the training he received changed his life because he gained confidence to be in crowds, which was challenging when he first began losing his sight. Discussing ATC training, **Mr. Schneider** said that very student, no matter if they are partially sighted, is completely blinded by sleep shades in ATC classes, including wood shop classes. Mr. Schneider explained the reason for this teaching method is to show students that blind people can do everything anybody else can do – they just do it differently.

**Senator Schmidt** said, as a Senate committee, it is their responsibility to fulfill their obligation to confirm that Mr. Schneider has met the statutory requirements for his position. **Senator Schmidt** said one of the requirements for this position is that at least three of the five members of the board must be blind or visually impaired and asked Mr. Schneider if he can tell the committee if that's the case. **Mr. Schneider** confirmed this requirement. **Senator Schmidt** said the other requirement is that not more than three people shall belong to the same political party and asked Mr. Schneider to speak on that. **Mr. Schneider** said he is a registered Democrat but that he did not know the political affiliations of all members of the board.

**GUBERNATORIAL  
APPOINTMENT:**

**Consideration of Gubernatorial Appointment of Sue A. Payne to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.** **Chairman Heider** introduced Sue A. Payne and asked Ms. Payne to tell the Committee about herself and why she would like to be appointed to the Commission.

**Ms. Payne** said she's lived in Boise for 29 years and has worked for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for 27 of those years – first in Idaho Falls, then in Boise. By working in that field, she thought she knew a fair amount about blindness and visual impairment. But, after working for the CBVI for two years, she said she learned she didn't know much about blindness at all. **Ms. Payne** said being with the CBVI was a great learning experience. One of the things she learned is that you use your other senses so much more when you don't have your vision. **Ms. Payne** called herself the board's token person, having no visual impairment. She said she took ATC classes to get a better idea of the students' experience. **Ms. Payne** said students have mentioned that the ATC instructors are wonderful. A lot of the instructors are visually impaired or blind themselves, and they lead their students through daily activities that sighted people don't give much thought to. Some of ATC students who go through training continue on to college and various careers. Many have started businesses or have secured good-paying jobs.

**Senator Martin** asked Ms. Payne to discuss what she has accomplished on the CBVI board – and tell the Committee about what she would like to achieve in the future. **Ms. Payne** stated one of her main strengths as a commissioner is her experience with vocational rehabilitation and knowledge of both federal and state laws and regulations. **Ms. Payne** indicated that she works to ensure that the Commission remains in compliance with all relevant laws and regulations. **Ms. Payne** stated that, in the future, she wants to prepare the Commission to comply with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

**Senator Schmidt** indicated that for reasons of statutory requirements, the Committee would like to know her political affiliation. **Ms. Payne** said she is registered as a Democrat. **Senator Schmidt** asked if Ms. Payne was confident that the Commission has the appropriate representation. **Ms. Payne** said yes.

#### **GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:**

**Consideration of Gubernatorial Appointment of Britt Raubenheimer to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.** **Chairman Heider** introduced Britt Raubenheimer and asked Ms. Raubenheimer to tell the Committee about herself and why she would like to be appointed to the Commission.

**Ms. Raubenheimer** said she lost her vision about 15 years ago and assumed she would lose her job and her independence. Staff from the CBVI came to her home and taught her how to use a computer, which is critical to her work since she telecommutes and does almost all her work on a computer. She said they also taught her how to use a cane to travel and taught her the skills of daily living necessary for her to be able to take care of herself. They taught her that she could have confidence and remain independent and successful in her career. That confidence, she said, is really important. She has served on the CBVI board for nine years and this will be her fourth appointment, if appointed. She would like to continue working with the CBVI board to ensure that blind Idahoans remain active and independent so they can contribute to their communities and have the ability to retain or gain employment.

**Chairman Heider** asked what she did for the Scripps Institute. **Ms. Raubenheimer** replied she did her PhD and post doctoral work at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. As an ocean physicist by training, Ms. Raubenheimer said she studies coasts, shallow waters and large lakes and examines the effects of extreme events like Hurricane Sandy.

**Senator Martin** asked Ms. Raubenheimer to discuss what she has accomplished while serving on the CBVI board – and tell the Committee about what she would like to achieve in the future. **Ms. Raubenheimer** said it would be hard to isolate what she has done alone, and noted that the board makes suggestions to improve CBVI services. In particular, Ms. Raubenheimer stated that the CBVI board implemented a "college days" program to provide visually impaired students who are starting college with extra training in how to take notes and care for themselves on their own. **Ms. Raubenheimer** noted improvements in data tracking and evaluations of new and existing programs. She also highlighted the addition of a traveling assistive technologist to the CBVI staff, who provides visually impaired people in outlying regions with computer and technology assistance. **Ms. Raubenheimer** stated that, in the future, she wanted the CBVI to spend funds in accordance with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and in a way that increases the employment rate of blind and visually impaired students.

**Senator Hagedorn** asked Ms. Raubenheimer to describe her greatest accomplishment since losing her vision. **Ms. Raubenheimer** responded she was scared to go out of her house, even to walk to the mailbox, when she first lost her vision; so being able to continue doing what she does could be her greatest accomplishment. She explained the first few years were really tough and that pushing herself – even when she was scared – helped her to succeed and build up her confidence. **Ms. Raubenheimer** said the CBVI really helped her with this accomplishment.

**VOTE ON  
GUBERNATORIAL  
APPOINTMENT:**

The Committee voted by **voice vote** to confirm the Gubernatorial appointment of Britt Raubenheimer to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. **Senator Keough** will carry Ms. Raubenheimer's appointment to the floor.

**VOTE ON  
GUBERNATORIAL  
APPOINTMENT:**

The Committee voted by **voice vote** to confirm the Gubernatorial appointment of Sue A. Payne to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. **Senator Hagedorn** will carry Ms. Payne's appointment to the floor.

**VOTE ON  
GUBERNATORIAL  
APPOINTMENT:**

The Committee voted by **voice vote** to confirm the Gubernatorial appointment of Allan R. Schneider to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. **Senator Schmidt** will carry Mr. Schneider's appointment to the floor.

**ADJOURNED:**

**Chairman Heider** thanked all three appointees for their service. There being no further business, **Chairman Heider** adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.

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Senator Heider  
Chair

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Karen Westbrook  
Secretary

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Kara Machado  
Assistant