

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 03, 2016

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

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Nonini, Patrick, Souza, Den Hartog, Buckner-Webb and Ward-Engelking

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Anthon

**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 Mortimer** called the Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.

**PRESENTATION:** **Ken Edmunds**, Director, Department of Labor (DL), updated the Committee regarding the work of the DL. He announced to the Committee that the Governor's budget proposal for his department and the work it will do is a dream come true. He gave a brief overview of the different areas of DL and explained the majority of funds received are because of the federal unemployment tax.

**Director Edmunds** emphasized that the labor and job market in Idaho is good. He reported that Idaho ranks as a national leader in job growth and low unemployment rates. He stated that due to employee shortages, the minimum wage is rising on its own; job openings outnumber employees two to one. He detailed the workforce shortage and stated there is a fear in the DL that they will not be able to help employers because there is a skill gap.

**Director Edmunds** detailed the Workforce Development Training Fund (WDTF) which is helping businesses in Idaho. Funds are delivered via three different kinds of grants; 1.) Employer Grants, which are for training in new or expanded businesses; 2.) Industry Sector Grants (ISG), which are used in the institutions of higher learning for curriculum development to train for the positions; and 3.) Rural Micro-Grants, which are community-based partnerships with a maximum \$25,000 award. He played a video showing these grants at work in Idaho.

**Director Edmunds** addressed the current legislative agenda and explained how DL appreciates the career advising and planning tools. The DL has discovered the youth in Idaho are not aware of their options after completing high school; DL highly advocates more focus on professional-technical education. He concluded his presentation by stating that everything in the Governor's budget proposal is essential (see attachment 1).

**Senator Den Hartog** complimented Director Edmunds his work and the collective efforts of the DL. She asked where the funding comes from for the grants that are going to businesses. **Director Edmunds** said they come from the three percent of the unemployment tax that is set aside for workforce development training.

**Senator Den Hartog** asked if the funds go to existing companies in the State or are they used to lure new companies to come to Idaho. **Director Edmunds** said the employer grants go to new and expanding businesses. The focus is on expanding businesses. He said the benefit for existing companies is with the ISGs.

**Senator Den Hartog** stated she would like to see the funds go to existing businesses rather than the new businesses. She explained that those new businesses have not paid the taxes into the fund. **Director Edmunds** stated he isn't concerned about new companies coming into the State, it is the existing businesses that are in need of employees. He has firm data to show that if the existing businesses could find employees, they would grow more than what a new business would offer the state.

**Senator Nonini** asked if there are some things the Legislature could do to get the private sector involved in growth. **Director Edmunds** said the ISGs are bringing industry to the table in a way never seen before. The businesses receiving the grants are directly addressing the problem areas; they are involved in the development of the curriculum, and they are putting up matching money. The DL is hoping to expand the IDGs.

**Senator Patrick** said that he and the Director have spoken about the shortage of labor. He asked if it is possible to encourage companies to come into Idaho to develop more mechanization and robotics to help Idaho businesses with the labor issues. **Director Edmunds** gave the example of a company in Idaho that has created robots to remedy the labor shortage and in turn created another company: a robotics company. He stated that this offshoot company has now become the bigger company. He added that people in Idaho are becoming very innovative in solving their labor issues.

**Senator Souza** asked how minimum wage can be improved. **Director Edmunds** said that Idaho is no longer at the bottom in wages. Between 2013 and 2014 the state moved up by ten points: Idaho is now thirty-eighth in the nation in wages. The issue is not minimum wage. Due to the employee shortage, Idaho's minimum wage averages around nine to ten dollars.

**Chairman Mortimer** thanked Director Edmunds for his presentation and the DL's interest in education.

**RS 24247**

**Senator Bert Brackett** presented **RS 24247**, Relating to School District Board of Trustees: Revise Provisions Regarding Elections for School District Board Trustees. He said the purpose for this legislation is to require write-in candidates in school board elections to submit five qualified elector signatures from within the trustee's zone. This amends Idaho Code § 33-502B. **Senator Brackett** explained that the traditional school board trustee candidates and the write-in candidates currently must meet all the same requirements except for the support signature. This change will create consistency and demonstrates the write-in has support from within the trustee's zone.

**MOTION:**

**Vice Chairman Thayne** moved to send **RS 24247** to print. **Senator Souza** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**GUBERNATORIAL  
CONFIRMATION  
VOTE:**

**Senator Nonini** moved to send the Gubernatorial appointment of Dr. Linda Clark to the floor with the recommendation she be confirmed by the Senate. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Senator Nonini will carry the appointment to the floor.

**PRESENTATION:**

**Paul Headlee**, Deputy Division Manager, Budget and Policy Analysis, Legislative Services Office, presented the education budget for the Committee. He recalled to the Committee the 22-year history of education appropriations and stated that during that time, the average funding to education was 48.1 percent of the General Fund. He explained the downward trend of education spending verses the upward trend in spending on health and welfare and on corrections.

**Mr. Headlee** outlined for the Committee the extensive education budget of the state. He explained the comparative summary and detailed each section: 1.) Administrators; 2.) Teachers; 3.) Operations; 4.) Children's Programs; 5.) Central Services; and 6.) Educational Services for the Deaf & Blind. He explained that many of the expenditures in the budget are in response to statutes. He noted the difference in some line item recommendations from the Governor and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. **Mr. Headlee** explained the term support units and how they are funded (see attachment 2).

**ADJOURNED:** There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:21 p.m.

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Senator Dean D. Mortimer  
Chair

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LeAnn Mohr  
Secretary