

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 08, 2017

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

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Winder, Nonini, Den Hartog, Guthrie, Crabtree, Buckner-Webb, and Ward-Engelking

**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 Mortimer called the Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:01 p.m.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Alan Reed**, President, Idaho Public Charter School Commission (Commission) introduced the three appointments to the Commission and provided a brief background update of the candidates.

**Sherrilynn W. Bair, Idaho Public Charter School Commission. Term Commencing July 28, 2016 and expiring May 12, 2020.** **Ms. Bair** said she is vested in education beginning with PTA. Over time her interest grew into a career and a passion. She believes that families should have options in their children's schooling; one schooling style doesn't always fit for every child. She said it is important the school choices that families have are quality choices.

**Senator Winder** asked her to expand on the challenges she has encountered while serving on the Commission. **Ms. Bair** replied the perception that public charter schools are not public schools. She said this is the first year for the renewal process for charter schools and has proved to be challenging. She explained the startup funding is also a challenge which can hinder petitioning of new schools.

**Senator Dan Hartog** asked her to address the relationship between the charter schools and the Commission. **Ms. Bair** replied the role of the Commission is oversight: they are to provide training and support to help schools to achieve their mission.

**Senator Nonini** said he is an advocate of charter schools and parental choice. He asked if Ms. Bair sees the role of the Commission as advocate, advisory, or regulator. **Ms. Bair** replied advocate.

**Chairman Mortimer** asked if there is one thing she would like to see changed regarding the public charter schools. **Ms. Bair** replied to make sure that decisions are made for the best interest of the student.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:** **Wanda Chillingworth Quinn, Idaho Public Charter School Commission. Term Commencing May 12, 2016 and expiring May 12, 2020.** **Ms. Quinn** reported to the committee the composition of her family and her background in education. She said in 1998 the first charter school legislation was enacted. She explained that Coeur d'Alene school district was one of the first to open a charter school in the State. She explained the processes and the successes of opening a public charter school.

**Senator Dan Hartog** asked if the public charter school renewal process is fair and effective. **Ms. Quinn** replied the renewal process measures academic performance, financial operations, and finances. If all three categories measure high the charter school does not have to submit for the renewal process. She explained the public charter schools submittal process is discretionary.

**Chairman Mortimer** asked what is the one thing Ms. Quinn would like to change with the charter schools. **Ms. Quinn** replied the alternative schools have more issues regarding conditions for approval; many are virtual schools. She suggested that public charter alternative schools need different criteria for approval.

**GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT:**

**Brian Scigliano, Idaho Public Charter School Commission. Term Commencing May 12, 2016 and expiring May 12, 2020. Mr. Scigliano** reported to the Committee his background, family makeup, and his interest in education. He said that in raising his children he realized that one school and one format did not fit every child. He believes the public charter schools offer families more schooling options. He currently serves as the Vice Chairman of the Commission and said he is excited for what the future offers public charter schools.

**Senator Nonini** asked if limited resources affect charter schools ability to build or expand. **Mr. Scigliano** replied that facilities funding is an issue and hopes that could be improved upon. That should not be the first challenge schools face.

**Vice Chairman Thayn** asked if there should be some changes made for the structure of public charter schools. **Mr. Scigliano** replied public charter schools would like the funding of facilities to be more equitable. He said more collaboration with the traditional public schools in the districts would benefit both entities.

**Senator Dan Hartog** asked if public charter schools can fill the niche for specific kinds of learning. **Mr. Scigliano** replied in the affirmative.

**Senator Buckner-Webb** stated she believes in parental choice. She asked if there is the perception that public charter schools are not equal to public schools. **Mr. Scigliano** replied the public charter schools do not mirror the traditional public schools. He reminded the Committee that the majority of the public charter schools are alternative schools.

**Chairman Mortimer** asked if the Commission should be making changes in their operations. **Mr. Scigliano** replied the Commission is doing an excellent job.

**PRESENTATION:**

**Idaho Public Television (IPTV). Ron Pisaneschi**, Director introduced staff members and board members in attendance. He gave an overview of the content and services of IPTV which include the educational services from PBS for all ages. He detailed the variety of programs which augment many subjects in all the grade levels and reported that those who engage with the PBS programs measure higher in testing results (see Attachment 1). **Mr. Pisaneschi** showed videos regarding science learning, and the locally produced show Outdoor Idaho. He commented on the awards IPTV has won, including an Emmy.

**Mr. Pisaneschi** detailed the 2017 budget requests, operational funding outlook, and equipment funding. He emphasized the concern regarding the loss of some federal grants as well as the compacting of broadcasting channels, which could have an impact IPTV's statewide broadcasting reach.

**PRESENTATION: Teacher Shortage. Sherri Ybarra**, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Department of Education outlined the education goals for Idaho: 1.) all students persevere for college and careers; 2.) accountability is everybody's responsibility; and 3.) attract and retain great teachers and leaders. She explained districts are struggling more than ever to find qualified teachers for the classroom. It is her goal with this presentation to develop solutions to remedy the teacher shortage in Idaho.

**Duncan Robb**, Chief Policy Advisor, SDE, said Idaho has a teacher shortage which is not uniform across the State. He said in certain districts and in certain educational subjects there is a challenge in recruiting and retaining qualified educators in Idaho. **Mr. Robb** explained the questionnaire was sent out to superintendents across the State asking two questions: 1.) which positions were unfilled; and 2.) have they declared a hiring emergency. He detailed for the Committee with data the results of the questionnaire. The findings show the common area of need is in special education, core content areas, and technology or computer literacy.

**Mr. Robb** said that rural districts have an especially difficult time holding on to quality educators. It is the students in rural Idaho, whose educational needs are not being met (see Attachment 2). The results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in grade four reading and grade eight math, show that Idaho children in rural communities are falling behind their suburb peers in proficiency.

**Mr. Robb** said SDE is committed to solutions. He explained that superintendents across the State have proposed ideas to remedy the teacher shortage. He detailed for the Committee the most frequent recommendations: 1.) grow paraprofessionals into certified roles; 2.) create a path for professionals from related careers to obtained certification; and 3.) make it easier for retired educators to reenter the profession.

**Mr. Robb** said the SDE is taking action by helping teachers obtain certification through an alternative authorization route such as the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) and Teach for America. They also encourage districts to use leadership premium dollars available, and are advocating for the career ladder funding and investing in paraprofessionals. He said SDE is observing what neighboring states are doing to address this challenge. There are many strategies to consider for solving the teacher shortage.

**Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if any legislation will be brought forward to address the stated solutions. **Mr. Robb** replied that these suggestions are strategies to consider. The only strategy that will be addressed by legislation this year is rural education centers.

**Senator Winder** asked if there has been any research done regarding the cycles of teacher shortages and overages. **Mr. Robb** replied in the affirmative and explained the Education Commission of the States (ECS) has studied this issue. He stated enrollment in teacher education programs is inversely related to the health of the economy. He emphasized even when there is a surplus of teachers, there are classrooms that won't have educators in them on the first day of school and that tends to be in rural areas.

**Senator Winder** asked if student loan forgiveness for student debt could be a possible solution and is it currently being used. **Superintendent Ybarra** replied there are still programs for debt forgiveness but the person must be teaching in poverty areas.

**Senator Guthrie** asked if there are things being done to change the public perception of becoming a teacher. **Superintendent Ybarra** replied there is a negative culture regarding being a teacher. It is up to all of us to speak about the good qualities of becoming a teacher.

**Senator Dan Hartog** said in regards to the next generation, this profession may not seem appealing. She asked if strides are being made to promote teaching as a viable career. **Superintendent Ybarra** replied the classroom is changing as are the qualities and qualifications to be a teacher. She said she believes this will attract the next generation into becoming a teacher.

**Senator Nonini** asked if areas of the State which border other states are losing teachers strictly because of pay. **Mr. Robb** replied in the affirmative.

**Chairman Mortimer** stated that education is moving forward and is making great strides. Please note that the educational professionals are appreciated.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:38 p.m.

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Senator Dean M. Mortimer  
Chair

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LeAnn Mohr  
Secretary