

MINUTES

HOUSE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, March 02, 2017
TIME: 1:30 PM or Upon Adjournment
PLACE: Room EW41
MEMBERS: Chairman Raybould, Vice Chairman Thompson, Representatives Hartgen, Vander Woude, Anderson, Anderst, Mendive, Trujillo, Chaney, Nate, Cheatham, Horman, Malek, Moon, Smith, Scott, Jordan, Rubel
**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Rep. Vander Woude
GUESTS: Larry Benton, Broadcasters Association of Idaho; Ron Pisaneshi, Idaho Public Television; and Robert Trumen, KBOI-TV, Sinclair Broadcasting.

Chairman Raybould called the meeting to order at 2:16 p.m.

H 236: **Rep. Thompson** explained that **H 236** is legislation that defines broadcasters as first informers during emergencies and allows them to take care of their transmitters during emergencies. Given the similarity to first responders, the title is suitable. **H 236** ensures that emergency broadcasters have access in emergencies to their tools and fuels for generators for the purposes of keeping transmission signals up and running. The need was displayed when an engineer was denied access to a transmitter during the Soda Springs Fire and in Hurricane Katrina when broadcasters were denied gasoline to power their transmitters. First informer broadcasters will be required to complete certification and training required by the state broadcasters association.

In response to committee questions regarding requirements and training to become first informer broadcasters, **Rep. Thompson** stated the training is developed and controlled by the Broadcaster Association of Idaho (BAI), and he introduced **Larry Benton**, from BAI to address certification specifics. Mr. Benton informed the committee the training is basically in cooperation with the management services department and the emergency management services department, who will help them develop a valid program and do it properly so that applicants who don't understand the intensity of an emergency will understand after the course. Certification will not be a financial burden to the state because the broadcasters will take care of the costs, and training will be open to anyone who wants to take the training, but the permission to access emergency venues still resides with the people in emergency management. BAI wants to get the law passed and then develop the program.

Larry Benton, representing BAI; **Ron Pisaneshi**, General Manager, Idaho Public Television; **Robert Truman**, General Manager, Sinclair Broadcast Group, KBOI TV, spoke **in support** of **H 236** explaining the legislation is about keeping transmitters viable and working to operate within Federal Communications Commission parameters and will allow broadcasting staff access to emergency sites by emergency personnel. It is not about getting in to emergency areas for reporting. It is about keeping the signal up and broadcasting to the community in rural areas where they are the only source of information. Similar legislation was unanimously passed in Nevada, Oregon, West Virginia and Illinois.

Mr. Benton stated, in reply to committee questions, that the number of broadcasters entering emergency sites would be limited because they have to be trained, and he assured committee members that the authority for an emergency site would remain with emergency personnel, with first informer broadcasters only having authority to go in and maintain or repair a broadcasting transmitter under the authority of emergency personnel. Committee Members discussed the perimeters and limitations of the authority granted to broadcasters under **H 236**, and Mr. Benton stated the legislation provides emergency training certification authority to broadcasters to be able to service their equipment and make sure their broadcasts go out, but does not provide authority over anyone.

MOTION: **Rep. Malek** made a motion to send **H 236** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

In opposition to the motion, **Rep. Trujillo** opined the language of **H 236** is too broadly written and allows the possibility of a broadcaster to have authority over emergency management personnel.

ROLL CALL VOTE: **Rep. Trujillo** requested a roll call vote on **H 236**. **Motion carried by a vote of 11 AYE, 5 NAY, 2 Absent/Excused.** **Voting in favor** of the motion: **Reps. Thompson, Hartgen, Anderst, Mendive, Cheatham, Horman, Malek, Smith, Jordan, Rubel, and Chairman Raybould.** **Voting in opposition** to the motion: **Reps. Trujillo, Chaney, Nate, Moon and Scott.** **Reps. Vander Woude and Anderson were absent/excused.** **Rep. Thompson** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

Chairman Raybould presented a draft letter to Idaho's US Congressmen requesting matching funds for 2018 to combat the immediate threat of quagga mussels. (Attachment 1.) He requested committee members take the draft and review it to see if they can approve and sign the letter to each of the four Idaho congressmen. Chairman Raybould emphasized that quagga mussel infestation is the biggest threat to the state.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2.56 p.m.

Representative Raybould
Chair

Lorrie Byerly
Secretary