

MINUTES
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 04, 2020

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Brackett, Vice Chairman Crabtree, Senators Winder, Den Hartog, Lodge, Rice, Burtenshaw, Buckner-Webb, and Nelson

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: With a quorum present, **Chairman Brackett** convened the meeting of the Senate Transportation Committee (Committee) at 1:30 p.m. He welcomed Senator Mathias who was filling in for Senator Buckner-Webb.

RS 27536 **Senator Johnson**, District 6, presented **RS 27536** and said that it is a concurrent resolution that forms an interim committee to study and develop a strategy for sustainable intrastate commercial air service in Idaho. The resolution outlines the findings and solutions justifying the study. He talked about losing Alaska Airlines flights in Lewiston, which means he now has to travel north in order to get to Boise in the south. The cost and time involved is a big consideration, and he believes the same can be said with air travel in southeast Idaho. After speaking with many business and airport authorities, there is excitement about reconnecting the state in air travel as it continues to grow. He announced there were representatives of local governments and businesses from around the state in the audience, some of whom would like to share their support of this legislation.

DISCUSSION: **Chairman Brackett** said that there was an excellent presentation at the chamber of commerce luncheon earlier where it was clear that what Wyoming had done could be used as a blueprint for Idaho.

Senator Nelson agreed there was a need for air service in Idaho, but he was concerned with the makeup of the study committee having only one member of the House and one of the Senate, meaning no minority party representation. **Senator Johnson** disagreed that it automatically meant a member of the minority party would not be selected. There should be no partisanship on an issue like this one. He said that there are two competing airports represented in Committee, but they understand that everyone needs to work together to get this done. If the committee is too large it tends to be unworkable. The House and Senate members chosen will choose the other members who will represent the entire state. The membership, no matter their political affiliation, will all be voting members.

Senator Winder discussed the makeup of the proposed membership with regard to industry, because they are the ones who will make it work. He responded to an inquiry from Senator Rice about the parameters of the working group by explaining this could have also been called a task force because the bill deals with a strategic planning process without expectations of a specific outcome at the end.

TESTIMONY: **Tony Bean**, Executive Director of the Moscow/Pullman Regional Airport; **Bill McKown**, Interim Manager of the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport Authority; and **Gary Peters**, Board Chairman of the Lewiston-Nez Perce County Regional Airport Authority, all spoke in support of **RS 27536** and expressed the impact that intrastate air service would have on the communities and the economy in their regions.

MOTION: **Senator Winder** moved to send **RS 27536** to print. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Johnson** closed by stating that those working every day in the air service industry have the pulse of their communities, and if we continue to lose air service, then federal dollars for our airports will also be lost.

VOICE VOTE: The motion to send **RS 27536** to print passed by **voice vote**.

S 1249 **Senator Bayer**, District 21, said that **S 1249** creates a "Choose Life" specialty license plate that will support unborn children, and Choose Life Idaho, Inc. will benefit from the funds raised by the sale of the plates. This organization supports pregnancy care centers in Idaho, as well as the education and support of adoption. It is a positive choice for women searching for an alternative to abortion. **Senator Bayer** read a letter from Ray Shultz, a board member of Choose Life Idaho, Inc., that expressed his personal experience of being born to an unwed mother in San Francisco in 1957 and how grateful he was that his biological mother chose to give him up for adoption rather than abort him. **Senator Bayer** then deferred the rest of her time to David Lange, President of Choose Life Idaho, Inc.

Mr. Lange said the plates are available in 32 states and the District of Columbia, with more than a million sold nationwide since 2000. After deciding on the idea, his organization went through the proper legal steps to create a non-profit and develop the plate. They received some counsel and advice from Choose Life America and have decided to use their plate as Idaho's model. They receive no financial support from outside organizations. He closed by asking the Committee to make the plate available as a way to provide a life plan for unborn children.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Mathias** asked when Choose Life Idaho received their tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service. **Mr. Lange** said the letter is dated July, 2019.

TESTIMONY: **Kerry Uhlenkott**, Right to Life of Idaho lobbyist; **Blaine Conzatti** with the Family Policy Alliance; **Christian Welp** of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise; and **Linda Thomas** of Stanton Healthcare Clinics all spoke in support of **S 1249** and the supportive message for life it displays.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Mathias** commented that according to existing state law, a non-profit organization needs to demonstrate they had been operating for at least two years before a specialty plate could be considered, and Choose Life Idaho did not meet that requirement. Therefore, he could not support the legislation.

Senator Rice followed up on Senator Mathias' comment and stated that the first license plate may not be able to be issued for two years, but the Legislature has made exceptions in the past. Therefore, the time the organization has been in existence is arbitrary. He supports the legislation.

Senator Winder was concerned that this may open the specialty license plate system to plates with opposing points of view.

MOTION: **Senator Rice** moved to send **S 1249** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Crabtree** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. **Senators Mathias** and **Nelson** asked that they be recorded as voting nay. **Senator Bayer** will carry **S 1249** on the Senate floor.

ADJOURNED: With no further business before the Committee, **Chairman Brackett** adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m.

Senator Brackett
Chair

Gaye Bennett
Secretary