

MINUTES  
**SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Thursday, March 05, 2020

**TIME:** 1:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW53

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

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Burtenshaw

**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 1:36 p.m. He welcomed Nasimi Aghayev, the Consul General of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles to the Committee and invited him to tell the Committee about his country.

**PRESENTATION:** **Mr. Aghayev** said he covers 13 states in the western United States, including Idaho which is one of his favorites. He referred to his PowerPoint in describing the geographical boundaries of Azerbaijan. They are bordered by the Caspian Sea, which is the largest lake in the world, and by the countries of Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Iran. He described the history of his country and explained they are the only country bordering both Russia and Iran. This is Azerbaijan's second independent republic. The first was established in 1918; it became the first secular and parliamentary democracy in the entire Muslim world. In 1919 their republic gave voting rights to women, making them the first Muslim nation to do so, and a year before the United States did. They were invaded by the Bolsheviks in 1920 and were forced to be part of the Soviet Union for 71 years. Since 1991, Azerbaijan has been an independent republic once again (see attachment 1).

Today, hundreds of U.S. companies operate in Azerbaijan in many different areas of our economy. One of their priorities is to develop their transportation capacity. Because Azerbaijan is between Asia and Europe, they try to use this geographic location to the benefit of their economic diversification. They are in the process of implementing projects connecting the continents of Asia and Europe. One project that has already been implemented and is very successful is the Iron Silk Road: a network of railroad tracks connecting far East Asia with Europe through Azerbaijan. Baku, their capitol city, is the largest seaport on the Caspian Sea with great potential to accept and receive cargo.

Another project under development is Connect India, connecting India through Azerbaijan to northern Europe. These are important projects that will enable Azerbaijan to become a major transportation hub for the entire region, and help them diversify their economic development. Their important non-oil sectors are agriculture and technology, which is their greatest potential in partnering with Idaho.

**DISCUSSION:** **Chairman Brackett** asked what the terrain was like in Azerbaijan. **Mr. Aghayev** said the geography is very diverse with variations of flora and fauna, and out of 12 climate zones worldwide, Azerbaijan has 9. From tropical climate along the coast of the Caspian Sea to newly opened snow ski resorts, tourism is a significant economic factor in Azerbaijan.

**Senator Den Hartog** asked why Armenia divided the country. **Mr. Aghayev** said that the small region to the west of Armenia bordered by Iran is an autonomous republic that is part of Azerbaijan. He explained how these types of geographical territories occurred during the occupancy of the Soviet Union. The only way to get to the autonomous region is either by air or by ground travel through Iran or through Georgia and Turkey. It creates certain difficulties for the 300,000 people living there.

**Senator Winder** asked who Azerbaijan's customers were for oil and gas sales. **Mr. Aghayev** said that since signing an agreement with U.S. and European companies in 1994, the question has been how to get oil to markets. Since 2005 the route from the Caspian Sea through Georgia and Turkey has been in play. Ninety percent of oil to Europe and Israel comes from Azerbaijan. The revenue from this important energy source reduces poverty in his country. They are now implementing a \$40 billion project that will take Azerbaijani gas through the same route directly to consumers in Europe. The pipeline to Istanbul, Turkey is completed and the next phase of the pipeline is under construction, which will end in Italy. This will provide natural gas to the European Union members, which will help U.S. European allies diversify their oil supplies.

**MINUTES  
APPROVAL:**

**Senator Lodge** moved to approve the Minutes of Thursday, January 30, 2020. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**Senator Winder** moved to approve the Minutes of Tuesday, February 25, 2020. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**S 1230**

**Brian Goeke**, Idaho Transportation Department's (ITD) Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Policy Manager, said that **S 1230** had been held at a previous Committee meeting to the call of the Chair. Progress had been made on a resolution to the Committee's concerns in the form an amendment. As a reminder, this bill establishes a pathway to reinstatement for commercial driver's license (CDL) holders who have received a lifetime disqualification. The changes the amendment will put in place are that the applicant: 1.) will be required to hold a Class D license for three consecutive years before applying for reinstatement, and during those 3 years they cannot have been incarcerated; 2.) must submit a criminal background check that is free of any drug and alcohol related offenses for the 10 years prior to their application; 3.) must provide proof of completion of an appropriate rehabilitation program if the lifetime disqualification was related to drugs or alcohol; 4.) needs to take the online courses, pass the CDL skills and knowledge tests, maintain a mostly clean driving record for 10 years, and have a substantially clean driving record for three years; and 5.) will be given clear, explicit notice of what would invalidate a reinstatement. He concluded by thanking Chairman Brackett, Senator Rice, and the Trucking Advisory Council for their assistance in revising this legislation.

**MOTION:**

**Senator Rice** moved to send **S 1230** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Senator Rice will carry the bill on the Senate floor.

**H 486**

**Representative Ricks**, District 34, said this bill talks about unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), commonly called drones. This bill passed the House with unanimous support. Drones are being used everywhere these days, and he mentioned a number of great uses for drones. He provided an example of a farmer who had a section of his field that didn't look like the other sections. The farmer did some investigation and found by using a drone that they had black bean beetle infestation in their sugar beets. They spread some pesticide on the infected section and got rid of the beetles. It saved them almost \$70,000. This bill could help the police force and firemen use drones as well, because under current law, it's difficult for policemen to use drones without obtaining a warrant from a judge. He yielded time to Holly Cook from the Idaho Public Safety UAS Council.

**Ms. Cook** said that Idaho Code lacked clarity, offering proper use, and explaining the benefit of UASs to the public. **H 486** changes those deficiencies. Currently, law enforcement officers even have to go to judges to get a warrant to fly drones for simple uses. There are some commonsense uses that law enforcement and fire departments need, and that's why these changes are needed. Privacy issues are not being changed. This is a small step bill that will help stop clogging the courts, and this bill only applies to police, fire, and search and rescue efforts. A drone in a fire or police situation can replace two to four uniformed officers.

**TESTIMONY:**

**Steve Thomas**, an attorney testifying on behalf of himself, spoke neither in support nor in opposition, but raised his concern about the section of Idaho Code being revised and suggested it might need to be revisited for the purposes of commercial use next Legislative Session.

**MOTION:**

**Senator Winder** moved to send **H 486** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Crabtree** seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Senator Winder** said he had originally brought this legislation, which was the first of its kind in the nation. It is an ever-evolving topic, and he appreciates Representative Ricks bringing it this Legislative Session.

**VOICE VOTE:**

The motion to send **H 486** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation passed by **voice vote**. Senator Lent will carry the bill on the Senate floor.

**ADJOURNED:**

With no further business before the Committee, **Chairman Brackett** adjourned the meeting at 2:12 p.m.

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Senator Brackett  
Chair

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Gaye Bennett  
Secretary