

MINUTES
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 08, 2023

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room EW40

MEMBERS: Chairman Crane(13), Vice Chairman Young, Representatives Palmer, Barbieri, Holtzclaw (Yorgason), Scott, Andrus, Skaug, Alfieri, Allgood, Crane(12), Gannon, Green

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of session the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

Chairman Crane (13) called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

MOTION: **Rep. Allgood** made a motion to approve the minutes from February 1, 2023, and February 2, 2023. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

MOTION: **Vice Chair Young** made a motion to approve the minutes from February 6, 2023. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

H 11: **Rep. Alfieri** presented **H 11**, legislation prohibiting the state from using private moneys to administer elections. There is existing law prohibiting private moneys in local elections but there is not a law prohibiting the state.

Phil McGrane, Secretary of State, testified **in support** of **H 11**. In 2020 there was private grant money used by 49 states. There are existing laws preventing local elections from using private grant money but there is not law preventing the Secretary of State from using private money. Mr. McGrane stated it is the proper role of government to fund elections.

MOTION: **Rep. Scott** made a motion to send **H 11** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Alfieri** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

H 58: **Rep. Alfieri** presented **H 58**, legislation eliminating the school bond and levy election dates in March and August and consolidating those elections in May and November. This change will increase voter turn out for bonds and levies because the turn out for elections in May and November are much higher than turnout in March or August.

Dr. Jeff Dillon, Superintendent, Wilder School District, testified **in opposition** of **H 58** because education budgets from the state are set in March and the time frame to have contract negotiations and district budgets completed is not adequate to present a levy or bond on the May ballot. Dr. Dillon also indicated school district ballot measures get lost in the narrative of the ballot in November. In response to committee questions, Dr. Dillon stated there are occasions when the budget timing could be adjusted. He also noted Wilder School District gets a much higher percentage of voters participating in August because of their transparency to the voters.

Quinn Perry, Idaho School Boards Association, testified **in opposition** stating school districts and the legislature must work together to find solutions and **H 58** removes the tools schools have to operate without providing solutions. Ms. Perry stated her organization desires a higher voter turnout and also a conversation with all stakeholders. She shared bonds and levies are at the bottom of the ballot and are often overlooked. School districts have several time line limitations that make it difficult to use the May election date. Ms. Perry indicated presenting bonds and levies are the least favorite responsibility districts need to perform, but despite that, they continue to go above and beyond to inform their communities of election dates. They also use those dates to receive feedback from patrons and then rework plans to take proposals back to the voters.

Teresa Rae, School Board Trustee for Boundary School District, and **Brigham Cook**, Ririe School Board Chairman testified **in opposition**, stating May is too early to run a levy because their budget and contract negotiations are not completed in time. School districts need all four dates to do what is best for schools.

Ron Nate, Idaho Freedom Foundation, testified **in support** of **H 58** and cited his county's voter turn out is much higher in November and May when compared to March or August election dates. Mr. Nate stated it is more efficient to have fewer elections because it consolidates costs. It is also frustrating to have an election every three months. He proposed a possible compromise to hold a bond or levy election every four years in conjunction with the presidential primary in March.

Terry Jones, School Board Trustee for Emmett School District and Payette River Regional Technical Academy. Mr. Jones' testimony regarding **H 58** was neutral. He stated unfunded mandates and building maintenance make it necessary for his school districts' to present a levy and bond suppliers counsel his district to run their bonds and levies in March for optimal success and to never use the November date. Mr. Jones also shared his perspective as a property owner, saying he wants the best and efficient use of funds and school districts don't work hard enough to educate the public. In response to committee questions, Mr. Jones stated counselors, psychologists, special education teachers, para-professionals, nurses, teaching instructors are mandated, however, none are funded by the state.

Eric Hasselstrom, County Commissioner, Lewis County, testified **in opposition** to **H 58**, and stated there is no reason to have the election dates in March and August. Mr. Hasselstrom remarked Lewis County has a population of 3,500 and can not afford the cost of having elections in March and August.

Russell Hendricks, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation testified **in support** of **H 58** stating farmers and ranchers pay for levies and bonds on their personal residences and again on their agricultural land. Bonds and levies can increase their taxes by several thousand dollars. Mr. Hendricks indicated the legislature has done an excellent job funding K-12 education by increasing funding by 42% over the last three years and after the special session, increased funding \$330 million. Mr. Hendricks indicated their hope is for the state to properly fund education so levies and bonds are no longer needed and **H 58** is a great initial step to move to a new paradigm regarding how to fund schools.

Darcy Lammers and **Darren Taber** testified **in support** of **H 58**, stating school districts can improve communicating their needs to the voters and elections dates in March and August are not needed.

Rep. Alfieri presented closing testimony on **H 58** and stated school funding is a critical issue that needs addressed, however that is a separate issue. Rep. Alfieri remarked legislators need to understand who they serve and they serve the public, and if they believe that, they must engage them in the best manner possible. Holding elections in March or August when only 2 - 3% of the public turns out, is not serving the public.

MOTION: **Rep. Crane (12)** made a motion to send **H 58** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Alfieri** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:13 A.M.

Representative Crane (13)
Chair

Lisa Hendricks
Secretary