

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, March 16, 2023

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hartgen, Vice Chairman Nichols, Senators Foreman, Hart, Schroeder, Zuiderveld, and Taylor

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senators Carlson and Semmelroth

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 Hartgen** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:01 a.m.

GUBERNATORIAL REAPPOINTMENT: **Committee Consideration of the Gubernatorial Reappointment of Erik Olson to the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission** commencing July 1, 2022 and expiring July 1, 2024. **Mr. Olson** stated he was a fourth generation farmer from Bonners Ferry. He farmed 3,000 acres with his dad and uncle and had been involved with the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission since 2018. He said he had been involved with agriculture his whole life, including conservation issues and projects since 1997 when he started farming professionally.

Chariman Hartgen inquired what Mr. Olson enjoyed about being on the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. **Mr. Olson** replied he enjoyed seeing voluntary conservation efforts from landowners accomplished. It was important for landowners and livestock producers to be able to accomplish projects without the federal scope or mandates.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT: **Committee Consideration of the Gubernatorial Appointment of Richard Savage to the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission** commencing August 15, 2022 and expiring July 1, 2026. **Mr. Savage** cited he had ranched the northern part of Idaho his whole life. He had a passion for conservation and Idaho natural resources. He explained he was in the cattle industry, which taught him the importance of hard work, discipline, and business management. He said he took great pride in being involved in matters important to the cattle industry and matters within the community.

Chairman Hartgen inquired where Hamer, Idaho was, and what was he looking forward to most about serving on the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. **Mr. Savage** replied Hamer was near Idaho Falls. He stated he looked forward to improved management of sagebrush, watersheds and Sage Grouse Habitat, and desired to see projects accomplished.

PRESENTATION: **Veterinarian Task Force Report.** **Brent Olmsted**, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, introduced a few Task Force members who were presenting to the Committee. He mentioned a bill was introduced at the 2022 Legislative session, regarding the need for more veterinarian programs. Unfortunately there was not enough information for the Legislature to act upon it. **Mr. Olmsted** stated the University of Idaho (U of I) organized a Veterinarian Task Force to study the need for veterinarians, particularly large animal veterinarians in rural areas of Idaho (Attachment 1).

Braden Jensen, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, emphasized Idaho was a livestock state, with an estimated 2,762,000 (cattle, sheep, pigs), Idaho was in need of large animal veterinarians. Nationwide only five percent of veterinarians worked in the food animal sector, and only three to four percent of new graduates were food animal veterinarians. **Mr. Jensen** stated there were many rural hurdles, with the high education costs, lower potential earnings, and increased injury risk, large animal veterinarians were hard to come by. He mentioned the Idaho Farm Bureau supported efforts to incentivize veterinary students to study large animal medicine, by offering scholarships to return and practice in Idaho after graduation.

Dr. Mark McGuire, Associate Dean, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, U of I, stated there was a national shortage of veterinarians in rural America, it was not just an Idaho issue. He cited the Washington-Idaho-Montana-Utah (WIMU) veterinary medical program. It had evolved over the years, from Washington to Idaho, then Oregon and Montana and finally Utah. This program funded out-of-state tuition at Washington State University for 44 Idaho residents annually, (11 per class). The number of students did not meet Idaho's needs, and the expectation for them to return to Idaho was low, the estimated shortage in Idaho was 40 and growing.

Senator Taylor asked if there was a stipulation on the tuition, where students needed to return to Idaho. **Dr. McGuire** answered it was something the task force was going to address.

Dr. Robert Collier, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, U of I, Head of Animal Veterinary and Food Science, cited that the veterinarian shortage was nationwide, but was especially acute in Idaho. There were many rural counties, and it did not take long to identify the problem was lack of large animal veterinarians. He stated the task force research focused on Washington-Wyoming-Alaska-Montana-Idaho (WWAMI) Medical Education. The students received tuition support throughout their four years, but needed to sign a contract, stipulating they would relocate back to Idaho, or would have to pay back the tuition. He cited the training program for rural Kansas at Kansas State University. It had a rural veterinary program within the veterinary medical program, which had been very successful.

Dr. Collier remarked the task force recommendations were to expand the program size from 11-20 students. Initiate a Targeted Rural Veterinary Program (TRVP) for Idaho WIMU students. Students who chose TRVP paid no tuition if they relocated to a rural practice within one year after graduation.

Senator Zuiderveld asked if the problem was wages in rural counties. **Dr. Collier** responded, the wages were lower in rural counties, most graduated veterinarians had an estimated \$270,000 student debt with starting wages in the \$60,000 - \$90,000 range.

**MINUTES
APPROVAL:**

Senator Taylor moved to approve the Minutes of February 28, 2023. **Senator Zuiderveld** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES
APPROVAL:**

Senator Schroeder moved to approve the Minutes of March 7, 2023. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED:

There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Hartgen** adjourned the meeting at 8:42 a.m.

Senator Hartgen
Chair

Melissa Price
Secretary