MINUTES
Approved by the Committee
Child Custody & Domestic Relations Task Force
Tuesday, September 30, 2025
10:00 A.M. MDT (9:00 A.M. PDT)
Nampa City Council Chambers
411 Third Street South
Nampa, Idaho

Legislative members in attendance: Cochairs Senator Tammy Nichols and Representative Heather Scott; Senators Carl Bjerke, Cindy Carlson, Josh Keyser, and James Ruchti (Zoom); Representatives Barbara Ehardt (Zoom), Marco Erickson (Zoom) and John Gannon. Legislative Services Office (LSO) staff: Elizabeth Bowen and Layce Silvey.

Others in attendance: Lance Strout, Aubery Erickson, Staci Taylor, Jackie Swartz, Joe Erickson, Veronica Baiz, Matthew Ray, and Kerry Michaelson.

NOTE: Presentations and handouts provided by the presenters/speakers are posted to the Idaho Legislature's website https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2025/interim, and copies of those items are on file at the Legislative Services Office in the State Capitol. Recordings of the meeting may be available under the committee's listing on the website.

Introductory Remarks

At 10:10 a.m., Cochair Nichols called the meeting to order; a silent roll call was taken. Cochair Nichols read a statement explaining the purpose of the task force: to address concerns of constituents in regard to child custody and family law cases; to determine whether Idaho courts are applying the law as intended by the legislature; and to determine whether the task force should recommend changes to the law to provide more clarity for citizens and the courts. The task force is reviewing issues of access to legal representations. The task force is not meeting to undermine the integrity of the courts, and asks the public to limit their commentary to the purpose of the task force.

Approval of Minutes

At 10:13 a.m., Sen. Carlson made a motion to approve the minutes for July 31st, 2025. The motion was seconded by Sen. Bjerke. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved.

Question and Answers: Idaho Judicial Council

At 10:15 a.m., **Jeff Brudie**, Executive Director of the Idaho Judicial Council, introduced himself, shared his professional background, and made himself available to answer questions from the task force.

- Cochair Scott asked about the steps of the Idaho Judicial Council (IJC) complaint process. Mr. Brudie responded that complaints come from litigants, the public, attorneys, and other judges. The IJC reviews the conduct of judges, but IJC does not review the law, legal decisions made by judges, or results in a case. The majority of complaints the IJC receive are about the results of a case rather than the judge's conduct. If the complaint includes a violation of the code of judicial conduct, the IJC begins a review of the court record and audio recordings of hearings. The IJC will begin an investigation of the complaint. If a violation has occurred, there are levels of private and public discipline. The most severe discipline is recommending the removal or retirement of a judge.
- Cochair Scott asked who first reviews the complaint when it is sent to the IJC. Mr. Brudie replied that he is the first person to review the complaint and perform the initial investigation. He summarizes his findings and sends it to the council for review and determination of what action should be taken.

- Cochair Scott asked about the eligibility of retired judges who have received formal public discipline to return to a judge position. Mr. Brudie responded that the judge would have to go through the application process or run for the position in an election.
- Sen. Carlson asked Mr. Brudie if all the reviewed complaints are presented to the IJC, or if any get thrown out. Mr. Brudie responded that all of the complaints go to the council.
- Sen. Bjerke asked if there has been an increase in complaints against judges in recent years. Mr. Brudie responded that overall complaints have consistently been around 90 each year. However, complaints regarding judges in child custody and civil protection orders have increased.
- Sen. Bjerke shared the task force's concern regarding the process litigants have to follow if they do not agree with a judge's ruling, because the appellate process can be cost-prohibitive for people. Sen. Bjerke asked if Mr. Brudie knew of any other process that looks into judges' decisions outside of the appellate process to review decisions. Mr. Brudie explained why the appellate process exists to create the entire record for the appellate court to review. Mr. Brudie acknowledged the challenges of the appellate process. Mr. Brudie described it as an expensive and technical process that pro se litigants are not often able to do themselves. Mr. Brudie could not imagine an alternative way outside the appellate process.
- Rep. Ehardt asked for clarification regarding how conduct is defined and reviewed by the IJC. Mr. Brudie responded that the IJC reviews how judges behave in the courtroom and how judges behave in their personal life.
- Rep. Ehardt asked for clarification regarding private reprimands given to judges, and if the complainant is informed of the IJC's private discipline. Mr. Brudie responded that the complaining party is informed of the IJC's decisions.
- Rep. Ehardt asked if the IJC punishes judges beyond private discipline if they are repeat offenders with continuous bad conduct. Mr. Brudie responded the IJC keeps all complaint history and reviews their history if they apply for new judge positions. Mr. Brudie shared that the IJC would consider past repeated discipline to determine a harsher punishment.
- Cochair Scott shared concerns about judges sealing records and turning off recorders in the court rooms, concealing their bad behavior in court. Mr. Brudie responded that he has not faced that situation and does not have experience with that. Mr. Brudie explained that the IJC has access to judges' decisions, but the public sometimes does not. Mr. Brudie shared that judges do not have access to turn recorders off and that they would have to ask on the record to turn the recording off.
- Sen. Carlson asked how someone makes a complaint to the IJC and if there is a required form. Mr. Brudie responded that complaints have to be submitted in the proper complaint form on the IJC's website. The IJC will return complaints to people instructing them to fill out their form.
- Cochair Scott asked if the IJC reviews the conduct of judges when they do not follow correct legal procedure, laws, or rules, and makes decisions contrary to what the law states. Mr. Brudie replied that the IJC would review that complaint.
- Rep. Ehardt asked if Mr. Brudie would be opposed to having video recordings in the courtrooms at all times except when children are discussed. Mr. Brudie responded he would not have an issue with video recordings in the courtrooms.

Idaho Child Protection Central Registry

At 10:45 a.m., **Andie Blackwood**, Child Welfare Chief, Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) presented on Idaho's Child Protection Central Registry

- Rep. Gannon asked if the district court includes a trial de novo when it reviews an earlier decision by a magistrate. Ms. Blackwood responded that she does not know about the district court process, however, DHW does accept new information.

- Cochair Nichols asked if Idaho's Child Protection Central Registry is a federal requirement, or created by the state. Ms. Blackwood responded that the registry is a part of the federal Adam Walsh Act, but Idaho has some flexibility regarding how it is implemented and how it functions.
- Cochair Scott asked if there are any financial incentives for Idaho from the federal government to have a certain number of people added to, kept on, or taken off the registry. Ms. Blackwood responded there are no financial incentives connected to the registry.
- Cochair Scott asked how a person's name gets added to the registry. Ms. Blackwood responded that a determination must be made that abuse, neglect, or abandonment of a child has occurred, as defined in statute.
- Sen. Bjerke asked how the registry is connected to issues in child custody cases. Ms. Blackwood responded that there are times when people use DHW as a way to try to discredit their child's other parent in child custody cases by making accusations to DHW. Ms. Blackwood explained that DHW is aware that sometimes parents have ulterior motives when they make child protection reports. DHW will investigate to determine if abuse, neglect, or abandonment occurred, and find out if the parent is being protective of their child and not using DHW as a tool to make the other parent look bad in court in their child custody case. Sen. Bjerke reflected on the challenges the task force faces listening to constituent stories and trying to understand if there is anything the legislature can do to help improve the child custody and family court system. Sen. Bjerke shared an example from a constituent, and asked Ms. Blackwood about the weight given to a child disclosing abuse by a parent during a child protection investigation. Ms. Blackwood responded that it is important for DHW to speak with both parents to determine whether there is a safe and protective parent available to care for the child, but DHW does not contact the judge overseeing an active child custody case involving the child. Ms. Blackwood shared that a family court judge may reach out to DHW and order a child protection investigation based on allegations coming out of a child custody case. DHW would then offer a report to the requesting judge.
- Rep. Ehardt asked how DHW defines abuse, neglect, and abandonment. Ms. Blackwood cited 16-1602, Idaho Code as defining terms used in child protection cases, and the definition of neglect comes from statute. Rep. Ehardt commented that the statute's definition is vague, and asked how DHW interprets the term "neglect." Ms. Blackwood responded that it can be challenging to define, because circumstances differ and families are unique. Ms. Blackwood clarified that the DHW is looking to see if children's needs are being met, and if they are not being met, will this cause immediate or long-term harm to the child.
- Rep. Ehardt asked how DHW insures consistent standards in child protection cases throughout the state, and how many children are removed by DHW from their home that should not have been removed. Ms. Blackwood responded that DHW has standards of practice that all DHW employees follow throughout the state. Ms. Blackwood responded she did not know the number of children who are inappropriately removed from their homes. Rep. Ehardt asked for clarification regarding the standards of practices, and if the task force could review the practice standards. Ms. Blackwood responded that she could make them available.
- Cochair Scott asked if the practice standards were in addition to DHW's policy. Ms. Blackwood responded that DHW has policies, standards, and administrative directives which all guide staff regarding their daily practice. Cochair Scott asked for clarification regarding the hierarchy of their policies and practice standards. Cochair Scott asked about constituent anecdotes about DHW refusing to investigate abuse allegations against their child's other parent. Rep. Scott asked about the training DHW employees have regarding child custody cases and domestic abuse and if DHW treats abuse allegations differently if they come from a child custody case. Ms. Blackwood responded that DHW caseworkers hold degrees, attend an academy training upon hiring, and receive online and on-the-job training. Ms. Blackwood responded that DHW investigates every abuse allegations, and sometimes partners with law enforcement. Cochair Scott asked about children being placed with a parent with a child sex abuse criminal record. Ms. Blackwood

responded that DHW does get involved and investigates cases where children are living with a parent with a Lewd and Lascivious conduct charge.

- Sen. Carlson asked what the cost of the registry is to the state, and how it is funded. Ms. Blackwood responded that she did not know. Sen. Carlson asked how the task force can find the information. Ms. Blackwood responded that she would have to do some research to find the answer. Sen. Carlson requested that the information regarding cost of the registry be looked into.
- Rep. Gannon asked how many child protection staff members DHW has employed. Ms. Blackwood responded that she would need to research the number and look at DHW's organizational chart, but estimated around 400 employees. Rep. Gannon asked what the turnover numbers were with child protection employees, and if DHW needed more positions.. Ms. Blackwood responded that she would need to look into the turnover rate, but she believed it stabilized after the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Blackwood acknowledged that the legislature gave 63 new positions to the child welfare program, and they are still reviewing the impact of the new positions.
- Rep. Scott asked how DHW insures accuracy in their child protection reports, and what happens if a caseworker omits or fabricates information in a report. Ms. Blackwood responded that caseworkers have meetings with supervisors and a team to ensure quality control in reporting. Ms. Blackwood explained that DHW would view an inaccurate report as a performance issue, and human resources would be notified. Ms. Blackwood said parents can contact regional managers or the DHW central office if reports contain inaccurate information.
- Rep. Ehardt asked what the liability for Idaho is if a child is removed from their parents and injured during care. Ms. Blackwood responded that she did not know. Rep. Ehardt asked what happens if a child is harmed during care. Ms. Blackwood responded that persons who caused the harm are made responsible. Rep. Ehardt asked if families are notified if their child is harmed while in care. Ms. Blackwood responded, yes, if the parents' rights have not been terminated. Rep. Ehardt asked what would happen to the child if they were harmed. Ms. Blackwood responded that the child would be removed from that foster home and relocated. Rep. Ehardt asked about the timing of a child being returned to their home. Ms. Blackwood replied that the average is 10months to reunify a child with their parent. The majority of children reunify once the parent is deemed safe for the child to return home to.

Domestic Relations Case Process

At 11:30 a.m., **Hon. Brian Lee** shared his professional history as an attorney and a magistrate judge. Judge Lee presented to the task force on the domestic relations case process, and opened the meeting up for questions and answers.

- Cochair Nichols asked Judge Lett to explain how temporary orders are used in child custody cases, and where their authority lies in statute. Judge Lee explained that temporary orders are included in the Family Law Rules authorized by the Idaho Supreme Court, and are used through motion practice to make a temporary ruling before the final order is in place. The temporary order would last until the case is resolved with a final decision, and the temporary order may be included into the final order. Judge Lee shared that most cases last six to 12 months, and do not have many opportunities to seek multiple temporary orders. Judge Lee responded that, in domestic violence cases, protection orders may address a temporary order regarding custody, but it is not meant to be the permanent solution. Judge Lee shared examples of temporary orders used in guardianship cases and child protection cases. Judge Lee explained the judge's role in child protection cases regarding placement of the child. Judges can reject a placement made by the DHW, but they cannot instruct where the child is placed. The DHW has authority over choosing where a child is placed. DHW prioritizes placement with family over non-relative foster homes.
- Cochair Scott asked about the ongoing use of temporary orders by one parent to prolong a child custody case, and how would the courts be impacted if the legislature created a law limiting the use of temporary orders a party can bring in custody cases. Judge Lee responded that there are

structural limitations to the orders already in place. Temporary orders expire once a final decision is issued, and the temporary order would be addressed in the final order, and would no longer have an affect. Cochair Scott asked about parents using temporary orders to keep their child from the other parent, and judges basing decisions on personalities rather than evidence. Judge Lee responded that both parties have an equal opportunity to present evidence, judges base their decision on the pleadings filed with the court, and a hearing is held giving an opportunity for the parties to make arguments before the judge. Judge Lee shared that he does not see successive filing of temporary orders in a case and that most of his custody cases resolve within a year. Judge Lee shared that exceptions are rare. Cochair Scott shared examples from constituents where child custody decisions were made preventing them from seeing their children, and the parent had no addiction issues or criminal record. Judge Lee explained that judges evaluate what is in the best interest of a child, and their decisions have to be derived from facts.

- Rep. Ehardt asked how a judge is reminded that parents have a natural right to raise their children, with exceptions being abuse, neglect, and abandonment. Judge Lee shared that the Idaho supreme court offers annual training for judges, but the subjects of the trainings vary. Judge Lee responded that judges follow the United States constitution, the Idaho onstitution, Idaho Code, and court rules. Rep. Ehardt asked if judges have challenges interpreting the current statutory definition of neglect. Judge Lee responded that he has a working comfort with the term neglect, and believed the Legislature intended the term neglect to be broad to account for a myriad of circumstances.
- Sen. Carlson asked about judges not taking into consideration children's thoughts or testimony in a child custody case. Judge Lee responded that he has not received special training in interviewing children. Judge Lee prefers children be interviewed by people who specialize in interviewing children through court services. Judge Lee typically only allows older children to testify in court. Judge Lee is cautious about involving children in the custody cases because of the trauma and long -term effects it can have on the child. Sen. Carlson asked how judges are able to gain clear and accurate information from children. Judge Lee responded that when he does conduct interviews with children, typically they are conducted with their siblings, but he prefers the children to be on their own in the courtroom with the court clerk, and the interview is recorded. Sen. Carlson asked how and who is defining mental illness with regards to parents in child custody cases. Judge Lee responded that the judge can order a mental health evaluation for a parent if a party files a pleading expressing concern about a parent's ability to parent based on mental illness. The judge would evaluate both parties' positions before making a ruling.
- Rep. Gannon asked about parties' equal access to legal representation in child custody cases and how awarding legal fees can assist parties with equal representations. Judge Lee responded that he does not often see one party being represented and one party not. He typically sees that there are either resources in the family for representation or there is not. Occasionally, family members might volunteer to pay for a party to be represented while the other party does not have representation. Judge Lee explained that usually both parties have counsel or neither party has counsel. Judge Lee shared that there are modest means programs for parties that do not have the ability to pay for counsel.

Judge Lee gave concluding remarks regarding the earlier question of judges stopping the recording during a court proceeding. Judge Lee shared that he did not have the ability to stop a recording, and would have to make that request on the record to stop the recording. Judge Lee explained that attorneys occasionally request sidebar discussions with judges to have brief conversations without the parties being present. The judge can mute his microphone so the conversation is kept private and not recorded.

Parenting Time Evaluations

At 12:22 p.m., **Tara Lzicar** shared a presentation on parent time evaluations and offered the task force members a handout.

- Cochair Nichols asked if parent time evaluators are ever asked to testify in court in addition to compiling reports. Ms. Lzicar responded that either party or the judge can request a parent time evaluator to testify in court. Cochair Nichols asked how the parent time evaluator handles challenges to the report by a party. Ms. Lzicar responded that a party would share their concerns with their attorney, and the attorney would address it in court. Cochair Nichols asked what the cost is to parties for a parent time evaluation. Ms. Lzicar responded that it is an expensive process and the parties typically share the cost. Evaluations cost $3,000-12,000. Occasionally, court assistance offices help pay for the cost of an evaluation.
- Cochair Scott asked what credentials are needed to offer parent time evaluation services. Ms. Lzicar responded that licensed clinical counselors, licensed social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists can be parent time evaluators.
- Rep. Ehardt asked how parent time evaluators are hired in child custody cases. Ms. Lzicar responded that some parent time evaluators are employees of the court and some are in private practice, hired by court order for child custody cases. Rep. Ehardt asked who pays for the parent time evaluators. Ms. Lzicar responded that the cost is included in the court order and each party is responsible to pay the cost, unless the cost is reduced through court services' assistance. Rep. Ehardt asked why a private business would be hired to do parent time evaluations rather than court-employed parent time evaluators. Ms. Lzicar responded that there are not enough parent time evaluators throughout the state to cover the number of cases.

At 12:30 p.m., the task force recessed for lunch.

Parenting Coordinator

At 1:10 p.m., **Frances Stern** shared her professional history as a former family law attorney for 31 years. Ms. Stern's current practice focuses on mediation and acting as a parenting coordinator in child custody cases. Ms. Stern has 170 active parenting coordination cases which are referred to her by the courts. Parenting coordination is authorized through 32-717D, Idaho Code and addressed in Idaho Rules of Family Law Procedure, Rule 1002. A parenting coordinator's job is to work with parties in high-conflict cases to encourage ways for the parties to communicate and parent together without involving the courts more than is necessary. Parenting coordinators are appointed in the most challenging child custody cases. The parenting coordinator program is an alternative dispute resolution to avoid long-term litigation in court.

- Cochair Nichols asked if parenting coordinators are always ordered by the court before entering a child custody case. Ms. Stern responded that parenting coordinators receive a specific order from the court listing their duties. Cochair Nichols asked how parenting coordinators are chosen by the courts. Ms. Stern responded that the Idaho Supreme Court maintains a list of approved parenting coordinators and, occasionally, judges choose individuals who are not on the list. Ms. Stern shared that it is difficult work and there are retention issues. Cochair Nichols asked how Ms. Stern is compensated. Ms. Stern shared that she is paid by the parties, and that the judge dictates the percentage each party will pay. Ms. Stern charges $325 per hour, which is split between parties.
- Sen. Bjerke asked Ms. Stern for her expert opinion regarding how the task force should approach statute changes to help mitigate the number of high-conflict child custody cases. Ms. Stern responded that the resources available in Idaho have not kept up with the population increase in the last 10 years. Ms. Stern shared that an increase in resources for court services could help improve outcomes.

Family Law

At 1:25 p.m., Bethany Star Niman gave a presentation about one of her family law cases involving a child custody dispute. Ms. Niman shared that she is angry at the court system and that judges have said things in chambers that, if said in open court, would open them up for civil litigation.

- Cochair Nichols asked how long Ms. Niman has been practicing. Ms. Niman replied that she graduated law school in 2024 and has been practicing law in criminal defense for a year and a half. Cochair Nichols asked how often Ms. Niman experiences sidebar conversation in judges' chambers. Ms. Niman responded in criminal cases, she has never experienced conversations with a judge and opposing counsel in chambers. Ms. Niman that she has only taken one family law case, and that conversations in chambers happened frequently out of earshot of the parties.
- Rep. Ehardt asked if attorneys should be held accountable if their client lies to the court during a child custody case. Ms. Niman responded that yes attorneys who knowingly make false representations in court should be held accountable. Rep. Ehardt asked who should hold DHW accountable when they are found lying in child protection cases. Ms. Niman responded that the Attorney General should hold them accountable. Rep. Ehardt asked why it takes so long for children to be returned to their parent if child protection accusations are deemed unfounded. Ms. Niman responded that she does not know why the process takes so long.
- Rep. Gannon asked if an Idaho Rules of Civil Procedure (IRCP) Rule 11 motion was filed in the case Ms. Niman is involved in where she mentioned that the attorney lied to the court. Ms. Niman responded that she is compiling a complaint to share with the Idaho State Bar against the attorney, but all her client's motions in her custody case has been shot down. However, Ms. Niman shared that she filed a disqualification motion against the judge and he agreed to step down. Rep. Gannon asked how many judges have been involved in the case. Ms. Niman shared that there have been four judges in total between the child custody case and hearings on protection orders.
- Rep. Scott asked if Ms. Niman has pursued complaints against the DHW workers, judges, and attorneys involved with the case, and if there has been any retaliation. Ms. Niman filed a motion to disqualify the judge, but did not file a complaint with the IJC, however, her client did, and never heard back from the IJC regarding her complaint.
- Cochair Nichols asked if parties in family court have the same constitutional protections as defendants in criminal cases. Ms. Niman responded that family court is more subjective, and due process is being ignored. Ms. Niman explained that in family court parties are not granted legal counsel and therefore their rights are not being protected.

Public Testimony

At 1:55 p.m., Cochair Scott opened the meeting for public testimony before the task force.

- Sara Brown testified about her family's experience with parental alienation. Rep. Scott asked what happens when the other parent violates a court order. Ms. Brown replied that filing a contempt of court is their only option, but this has only led to being ordered to mediation rather than the other parent being held accountable for not following the order.
- Kathleen Strout testified about her family's experience with parental alienation and negative experience working with a parenting coordinator. Ms. Strout recommended removing immunity for parenting coordinators and Guardian ad Litems working in child custody cases, requiring reporting of benefit fraud, and creating affordable resources for pro se parties. Rep. Gannon asked about the financial challenges of the parties in her family's case. Ms. Strout responded that the other party is on medicaid and subsidized housing. Rep. Scott asked what the custody time was for each parent. Ms. Strout replied 50-50 custody.
- Ian McDonald testified about his experience with a temporary protection order, being kept from his child, and being removed from his home. Cochair Nichols asked what documentation the court reviewed that led to his removal from the home. Mr. McDonald responded that he was not criminally charged and that his wife filed accusations without supporting evidence with the court. Mr. McDonald explained the challenge he is having finding an attorney to represent him.

- Aaron Brunson testified about his experience with temporary orders after a divorce decree had been issued. Mr. Brunson described the financial burden he faces paying for legal counsel to fight the post-divorce decree temporary order.
- Robert Mast testified about his son's murder in Lewiston during a child custody exchange. Mr. Mast described his son being wrongly accused of child abuse and being alienated from his children by his ex-wife. After Mr. Mast's son was exonerated, he regained legal access to his children, but he was murdered by his father-in-law.
- Tami McKenzie testified about her experience with a child custody case and child support. Ms. McKenzie recommended that there be a limit to motions for temporary orders filed in court to prevent legal costs from going up, prolonging a case unnecessarily, as well as prevent court decisions made on limited evidence.
- Holly Cook testified about her experience as a pro se litigant in family court. Ms. Cook addressed allegations of judicial misconduct in her case and having difficulty finding help. Ms. Cook addressed the challenges pro se litigants face when figuring out filing deadlines, how to file, and how to appeal decisions. Ms. Cook shared that the length of time a case remains on a judge's docket impacts their pay.
- Daniel Foregger testifed briefly about his experience with child custody. Mr. Foregger offered his recommendation for Idaho to fully adopt the presumption of equal custody standard for custody. Mr. Foregger cited Kentucky as an example of a state adopting the legislation.
- Don Hubin, chair of the board for the National Shared Parenting Organization, testified that, after 40 years studying the issue, they found equal and shared parenting is best for children, unless there is abuse by a parent. Mr. Hubin cited West Virginia, Kentucky, Arizona, and Arkansas as states that have adopted the presumption of equal and shared parenting legislation. Mr. Hubin shared that there is a decrease with percentages of domestic violence when there are shared custody orders, and that having one parent with sole custody creates conflict leading to violence. Mr. Hubin cited a study conducted in Idaho that showed 88% were in favor of equal and shared parenting.
- Kyle Christensen testified about his experience losing access to his teen child. Mr. Christensen described spending many thousands of dollars trying to gain custody time with his child. Cochair Scott asked about Mr. Christensen's current custody schedule. Mr. Christensen described having 50-50 custody during the summer and 36% of the custody during the school year, which is about 39% of time for the entire year.
- Laurel Sapp shared her experience as a mental health counselor working in Idaho four eight years and working in Tennessee before that. Ms. Sapp recommended that Idaho increase the support services like affordable therapy for families going through divorce and child custody disputes. Ms. Sapp recommended that Idaho start with equal parenting 50-50, and require co-parenting classes. Ms. Sapp recommended that Idaho get rid of court appointed evaluators and studies because of their cost and tendencies for bias. Ms. Sapp described the court as being adversarial and not always collaborative or looking out for the best interest of all family members. Rep. Ehardt asked what 50-50 means to Ms. Sapp. Ms. Sapp responded that she views it as equal time with the children. Sen. Carlson requested a copy of Ms. Sapp's written testimony, and Ms. Sapp agreed to share it.
- Tamara Ingle testified about her challenges with a child custody matter involving domestic violence and child abuse. Ms. Ingle described challenges finding legal counsel in a rural community and her concerns with judges expressing bias against one parent over the other.
- Teresa Palin testified about her family member's challenges with the child support system in Idaho. Ms. Palin's family member was out of work and his driver's license was suspended without being notified. Ms. Palin attended a previous Child Custody & Domestic Relations Task Force

meeting and heard DHW that state they only suspend recreational licenses. Ms. Palin described DHW's unwillingness to lower payments while her family member is out of work due to injury.

- Troy Vance shared his professional experience as a veteran in the military and law enforcement. Mr. Vance testified about his domestic relations case involving false allegations made by his former spouse. Mr. Vance shared about not being able to see his children for over 120 days. Rep. Ehardt asked for clarification regarding Mr. Vance's experience with social workers. Mr. Vance clarified while he and his wife were foster parents, social workers did regular checks at their homes, and they were ultimately able to adopt.
- Mark Snowball testified about his experience with a child custody matter involving false allegations made by his former spouse. Mr. Snowball shared that he has not seen his child in four years. Cochair Nichols asked if Mr. Snowball had legal representation and how much money he has spent. Mr. Snowball responded that he is representing himself pro se, but he has spent $10,000.
- Terry McLaughlin shared recommendations regarding child custody and domestic relations cases. Mr. McLaughlin recommended that divorce decrees and court orders have enforcement mechanisms to ensure they are followed by both parties, and to hold parties accountable. Mr. McLaughlin has spent over $120,000 in his case since 2016. Mr. McLaughlin shared that he paid $6,000 to a parent time evaluator.
- Stephen Tijerina testified about his domestic relations and child custody case. Mr. Tijerina shared that the cost of his attorney and legal fees was $80,000. Mr. Tijerina shared information about his child's experience with abuse in the other parent's home. Mr. Tijerina shared his belief that there is bias against him in court because he is a Christian. Cochair Nichols asked if Mr. Tijerina is represented by legal counsel, and what his custody schedule is currently. Mr. Tijerina responded that he is now representing himself pro se, and that his custody has been limited to six days a month on weekends because of false allegations made by his former spouse. Mr. Tijerina explained that he is unable to protect his child because he is now considered a vexatious litigant and cannot make reports or file motions with the court for civil protection orders.
- Tom Kofoed shared that his case occurred in 1989. Mr. Kofoed recommended Idaho follow the example of a 14 year-old girl that made changes in her state of Pennsylvania in response to the 2008 Kids for Cash scandal.
- Tyrie Strong, Strong Law, shared recommendations to change how parties file motions to disqualify judges. Ms. Strong recommended statutory changes to lay out a clear unbiased process where the motion would be reviewed by a three-person judge panel to be considered.
- Robert Garza, vice president of National Family Justice, director of Americans for Judicial Accountability, Advisory Counsel for National Shared Parenting Organization, shared recommendations for family court reform. Mr. Garza shared that it took him 16 years to gain joint custody of his children. Mr. Garza recommended that Idaho adopt equal 50-50 shared custody and that judges include findings of fact and conclusions of law in their ruling. Mr. Garza recommended Idaho adopt a bill for time taken, time back. If a parent denies the other parent time with their child due to false allegations, the time lost is given back to the parent who lost time. Mr. Garza recommended Idaho adopt a bill requiring cameras be in the court room to record proceedings. Mr. Garza recommended Idaho adopt legislation to allow parties to appeal temporary orders. Cochair Nichols asked if Idaho's family law issues are consistent with other states. Mr. Garza responded yes, similar issues are nationwide.

Committee Discussion

At 3:57 pm., Cochair Scott shared that the next task force meeting will be held on October 24th, 2025, in Boise.

Adjournment

At 4:00 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.