MINUTES

JOINT FINANCE-APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

DATE:	Wednesday, February 04, 2026
TIME:	8:00 A.M.
PLACE:	Room C310
MEMBERS PRESENT:	Senators Co-Chairman Grow, Cook, Bjerke, Hart, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Galloway, Ward-Engelking, Wintrow
	Representatives Co-Chairman Tanner (14), Miller, Furniss, Petzke, Manwaring, Mitchell, Price, Bruce, Harris, Green
ABSENT/ EXCUSED:	Senators Woodward
CONVENED:	**Co-Chairman Grow** called the meeting of the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (Committee) to order at **8:00 a.m.** with a quorum present.

LSO STAFF PRESENTATION: **Division of Idaho State Police (ISP), Noah Peterson, Budget & Policy Analyst, Legislative Services Office (LSO)**

Mr. Peterson presented the budget for the Division of the Idaho State Police (ISP), outlining its structure, staffing, and funding sources (see, attachment 1). The had 606.67 FTP positions with 78 vacancies as of November 2025 and an average fill rate of about 92% over five years.

He stated ISP was primarily funded by the General Fund, with about 28% coming from nine dedicated funds. He highlighted major dedicated funds, including the Law Enforcement Project Choice Fund, and explained that it was created in 2007 to support a career ladder for commissioned officers through a vehicle registration fee. The department proposed increasing that fee from $3 to $12 to support a new commissioned officer pay plan, which would shift Project Choice funds toward base pay and performance-based increases. He noted an additional increase was projected to generate $18 million annually and that the $12.6 million request would not move forward without the statutory fee change.

He reviewed five-year expenditures, noting ISP had spent about 83% of its appropriations on average, with most spending going toward personnel. He summarized recent budget enhancements, including federal grant increases, fund shifts from the Law Enforcement Fund to the General Fund following changes to highway distribution funding, salary increases for commissioned officers and forensic staff, and new positions.

He outlined FY 2027 budget enhancement requests including funding for the new commissioned officer pay plan, additional federal funds for the Commercial Vehicle Safety Grant, a one-time request for mobile live-scan fingerprint devices for ISP and rural agencies, and funding for replacement items such as patrol vehicles, ballistic vests, and equipment.

DISCUSSION: In response to Committee questions, **Mr. Peterson** explained the increase in the patrol program budget, along with the rise in dedicated funds, resulted from the proposed commissioned officer pay plan funded through the Law Enforcement Project Choice Fund. The proposed vehicle registration fee increase would generate revenue to support the $12.6 million request, with most of the impact reflected in the patrol program because it includes the largest number of commissioned officers. He clarified the funding for the 27 patrol vehicle replacements would come entirely from the General Fund portion of the request. He also confirmed the commissioned officer pay plan legislation was reflected in the Governor's budget in terms of the appropriation.

Colonel Bill Gardiner, ISP Director stood to address the Committee. He said he had committed the previous year to examining ISP's staffing shortages and formed a committee to identify the causes. He highlighted significant vacancies in several districts, especially Lewiston, where he had to rotate troopers from across the state to cover multiple counties. He noted similar concerns in Idaho Falls. He identified pay structure as the main issue. Trooper salaries were funded by both the General Fund and a $3 vehicle registration fee, but cost-of-living increases applied only to the General Fund portion. As a result, troopers did not receive full raises on their total wages, leading to a long-term pay gap of roughly $10 to $15 per hour over a career. He explained the proposed pay plan would apply increases to a trooper's full salary going forward, helping address retention problems.

In response to questions about the pay plan, he explained the projected $18 million in revenue was designed to ensure long-term sustainability, while the $12.6 million request reflected only what was needed to implement the plan. He said the structure included merit-based pay increases tied to performance evaluations and safeguards to return excess funds to the General Fund if balances grew too large. He emphasized the request was based strictly on projected need.

Addressing vacancy savings, he said unspent personnel funds were largely used for overtime due to staffing shortages. The agency also limited travel and discretionary spending while maintaining training and public safety coverage, using specialized teams strategically to fill gaps. He deferred to budget staff for detailed figures on personnel savings and overtime.

Christine Otto, ISP Financial Executive Officer stood to address the Committee, stating she could provide a detailed breakdown of unspent personnel funds, including overtime and comp time payouts. She explained troopers were currently allowed up to 30 hours of comp time payout per month and said she would follow up with the full figures, which are tracked biweekly.

Colonel Gardiner answered further questions from the Committee, stating troopers were most often lost around years four to five, after the state had invested heavily in training and certification. Responding to concerns about a wage competition with counties, he said ISP served as a supporting agency and did not view the situation as a wage war. When ISP hired from a county, the officer typically remained in the same community and continued serving as a resource.

LSO STAFF PRESENTATION: **PEACE OFFICERS' STANDARDS AND TRAINING ACADEMY (POST), LBB 3–093, Noah Peterson, LSO**

Mr. Peterson presented the budget review for the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Academy, explaining it was part of both the department and agency within Idaho State Police (see, attachment 2). POST had 31 FTP positions, with two vacancies as of November 2025. He stated POST was primarily funded by dedicated funds, including the Peace Officers Training Fund, supported by court fees and a portion of liquor revenue redirected by legislation in 2022, and the Misdemeanor Probation Training Fund, which supported basic training for probation officers. Over the past five years, POST had spent about 85% of its appropriations on average, with most expenditures going toward personnel and operating costs. Recent budget changes included minor adjustments for software licenses, a net-zero realignment, and the conversion of a part-time technical records position to full-time. For fiscal year 2027, he reported no ongoing requests but outlined a $324,100 one-time request from dedicated funds for replacement items, including vehicles, facility repairs, and technology upgrades.

Brad Johnson, POST Administrator stood to answer questions from the Committee about POST operations and costs. He said the Patrol Academy cost per student was about $10,700 for the 14-week program. Variations in annual expenditures were tied to fluctuations in dedicated fund revenue, which affected how much was spent or reverted each year. He explained several colleges offered POST-certified basic training programs, originally designed for self-sponsored students seeking law enforcement careers. Some agencies also sent officers through those programs. POST certified, audited, and monitored those programs to ensure approved curriculum standards were met.

Christine Otto stood to address the Committee. She clarified the estimated $231,600 cost per ISP trooper covered the full expense of hiring, equipping, housing, and training through ISP's separate advanced training program, not just academy instruction. She stated POST training costs were limited to academy expenses. She confirmed these were separate calculations.

Mr. Johnson said all students attending the POST Academy signed a two-year agreement requiring repayment if they left a certified position within that timeframe. He noted no current plans to extend the agreement. He also explained some agencies, including ISP and several large departments, operated POST-certified academies and were required to teach the same minimum curriculum, though they could add enhancements.

LSO STAFF PRESENTATION: **BRAND INSPECTION, Noah Peterson, LSO**

Mr. Peterson presented the budget review for the Brand Inspection Division within the Idaho State Police (see, attachment 3), explaining it protected the livestock industry from theft and illegal slaughter. The division had 41.42 FTP positions and a fill rate of about 96 percent, spending roughly 92.5 percent of its personnel appropriation on personnel costs. He said the division was funded entirely by dedicated funds through the State Brand Board Fund, supported by livestock inspection fees for cattle, horses, sheep, and other animals.

He provided estimated and actual expenditures from FY 22–FY26, stating over the past five years, expenditures averaged about 93 to 94 percent of appropriations. Most spending went toward personnel, with additional funds used for operating costs and capital outlay. Recent prior year budget enhancements included minor software costs and a 2 percent CEC increase, along with vehicle and IT replacements. For fiscal year 2027, no ongoing enhancements were requested, but $288,100 in dedicated funds was requested for replacement items, including six high-mileage trucks and updated laptops and tablets.

DISCUSSION: **Cody Burlile, State Brand Inspector** stood to answer questions from the Committee. The inspector explained most brand inspectors were POST-certified and had completed patrol academy training. About a year earlier, the division created two classifications: an entry-level, non-POST-certified position and a POST-certified position. He said roughly 28 inspectors were currently POST-certified. He confirmed POST-certified inspectors performed both regulatory brand inspections and law enforcement duties. While most of their work involved inspections, they also received additional training and handled enforcement responsibilities when needed.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business before the Committee, **Co-Chairman Grow** adjourned the meeting at **9:17 a.m.**

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Senator Grow
Chair

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Linsy Heiner
Secretary