

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 21, 2026

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Cook, Senators Woodward, Nichols, Carlson, Burtenshaw, Zito, Ward-Engelking, and Semmelroth

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

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 Lent** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT: **Committee Consideration of the Gubernatorial Appointment of Peter Koehler of Caldwell, Idaho to the Idaho State Board of Education** to serve a term from August 29, 2025 and expiring July 1, 2030. **Mr. Koehler** stated he was a retired army veteran after completing the ROTC program through the University of Idaho and completing 21 years in the United States Army. **Mr. Koehler** elaborated that after retiring from the military, he served as a teacher, a principal, and the superintendent for the Nampa School District. **Mr. Koehler** further stated he served as the Chief of Staff for the Department of Education, various state committees, and the Charter School Commission.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Semmelroth** asked what his vision was for Idaho and what he would like to bring to the Idaho State Board of Education. **Mr. Koehler** answered that education was essential for opportunity. He wanted to see students master reading and mathematics while introducing subjects under Career Technical Education and Financial Management. **Mr. Koehler** had a deep passion for K-12 and watching students succeed. He finished by mentioning he was a big believer in recess and that he believed it was important for students to play. **Senator Cook** asked Mr. Koehler about his experience as a superintendent and what his biggest challenge was. **Mr. Koehler** answered that the largest challenge was a financial issue in the Nampa School District. He overcame the challenge by negotiating with a bank to save teachers and by researching a levy the district could present to help its finances. **Senator Carlson** stated she would be comfortable with Mr. Koehler on the State Board due to his service to Idaho.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT: **Committee Consideration of the Gubernatorial Appointment of Jennifer White of Boise, Idaho as the Executive Director of the Office of the State Board of Education** to serve a term commencing May 12, 2025 and continuing at the pleasure of the Governor. **Ms. White** stated she was the Executive Director of the Idaho State Board of Education. She introduced and recognized her family, including her 98-year-old grandmother who was a kindergarten teacher. She was from the Treasure Valley but graduated from Willamette University in Oregon where she received the Harry S. Truman Scholarship for public service. She worked for Governor Dirk Kempthorne and Governor James Risch. She attended law school at the University of Washington and finished her degree at George Mason University. She worked as a trial attorney in Washington, D.C. before moving back to Boise. She previously worked for Boise State University

in their legal and government relations departments. She was passionate and proud to serve Idaho and in the Idaho education system.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** commented that she had been impressed with Ms. White's professionalism. **Senator Woodward** stated that he was appreciative of her bringing her family to support her. **Vice Chairman Cook** mentioned that he was very supportive of her confirmation. **Senator Carlson** commented that she was impressed with the work that Ms. White had done. **Senator Carlson** was excited to work with her. **Ms. White** stated she was grateful for the opportunity and was ready to bring education forward in the State.

RS 32954C1 **Senator Cook** presented **RS 32954C1** which would create a new chapter in Title 33, Idaho Code, to address the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in Idaho's public schools. It would set proactive guidelines for AI use and how it should be taught in schools.

MOTION: **Senator Burtenshaw** made the motion to send **RS 32954C1** to print. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 3:31 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Lauren Young
Secretary