

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, January 26, 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.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Zito** read and reviewed the minutes of the January 20, 2026 meeting. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the minutes. The minutes were approved by **voice vote**.

S 1225: **S 1225 - Amends existing law to establish provisions regarding public university president searches and to exempt certain related records from disclosure.** **Senator Den Hartog** presented that the bill would balance transparency in the State's ability to recruit and retain top talent for executive level positions, which will have an impact on the presidential search for Boise State University (BSU). This bill would codify a new section in Idaho Code Title 33, chapter 37 and amend I.C. §74-106 which was part of the Public Records Act. **Senator Den Hartog** noted that it would impact a larger number of entities than public universities. **Senator Den Hartog** asked the committee to send the bill to the 14th order for amendment to change the ten day waiting period to only affect public universities. The ten day waiting period was to allow for public engagement with a finalist before the State Board of Education would make a final decision.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked why BSU students are not a part of the search committee. **Senator Den Hartog** answered that the Dean of Students was involved and that students had a unique role but did not have all the insights on making a recommendation. She did note that students' voices played a large role in the subcommittee that BSU formed from the main search committee.

MOTION: **Senator Nichols** moved to send **S 1225** to the 14th order. **Senator Cook** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

RS 32848C1: **Senator Carlson** presented **RS 32848C1** which would change Lewis-Clark State College to Lewis-Clark State University throughout Idaho Code.

MOTION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **RS 32848C1** to print. **Senator Nichols** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Superintendent Debbie Critchfield** introduced the 2026 Idaho Teacher of the Year, Laron Johnson. Mr. Johnson was a Rigby High School teacher who taught history, social studies, Holocaust studies, and economics. **Laron Johnson** gave the committee a presentation on building connections between teachers and students. **Mr. Johnson** ended his presentation by thanking Emmie Johnson, the student who nominated him for Teacher of the Year.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Cook** asked whether student-teacher connections became less in large schools. **Mr. Johnson** answered that it was a concern but he tried his hardest to greet every student at the door and that elective classes were the best way to make connections with students. **Senator Semmelroth** asked what the Committee needs to know to support new teachers so they have long careers. **Mr. Johnson** responded by saying it was not the five year teachers who still have the fire, but the ten year teachers who need more support and encouragement. He mentioned that he always encouraged teachers to have a side project to focus on to keep them invested in students and to have a teaching partner. **Senator Nichols** asked what more he was going to do with his title. **Mr. Johnson** answered that he was going to keep doing what he was doing and he would keep going even after the year was over. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked how we could turn around how teachers were being perceived. **Mr. Johnson** responded that he would skip the phone and just teach. He continued by saying to find a good mentor and to focus on the kids.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Superintendent Debbie Critchfield** presented on Federal Flexibility Recommendations. She mentioned that Idaho had an opportunity to ask the federal government for education waivers. The Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) started the waiver conversation in April 2025. SDE proposed becoming an EdFlex state which would allow Idaho to recognize that one size doesn't fit all and that what worked at one school wouldn't work at another school. There were two specific waivers that SDE was requesting, one to remove the federal third grade literacy test due to it being similar to the state test. The second waiver was for eleventh grade to show they were career ready, allowing the student and parents to choose another state test in addition to the ISAT. The Idaho State Board of Education would create the list of additional tests which could include Career Technical Education state tests, the SAT, etc. **Superintendent Critchfield** hoped that this waiver would let the student own a stake in their future. SDE took public comment to gather feedback. After feedback was given and SDE submitted their final decision to the federal government, the federal government would have 90 days to respond.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked about the ACT not being on the list. **Superintendent Critchfield** answered that the presentation only showed some of the list. **Senator Semmelroth** asked if multi-measurement tests had been considered. **Superintendent Critchfield** responded that it was a part of the graduation requirements but that there was no formal test at this time.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 4:01 p.m.

Senator Lent
Chair

Lauren Young
Secretary