

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 10, 2026

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Nichols, Vice Chairman Zito, Senators Lakey, Lent, VanOrden, Blaylock, Kohl, Semmelroth, and Taylor

ABSENT/ EXCUSED:

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

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Lakey** moved to approve the Minutes of January 29, 2026. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Lakey** moved to approve the Minutes of February 3, 2026. **Senator Kohl** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Chairman Nichols passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Zito.

RS 33191 **Relating to Abatement of Rats.** **Chairman Nichols** explained the legislation declared Norway rats as a public nuisance and invasive pests under existing Idaho law, allowed coordination and oversight with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), and established reporting, transparency, and public education to address infestation quickly. She noted the ISDA and local county officials agreed this issue was a growing problem that required early and coordinated action.

MOTION: **Senator Semmelroth** moved to send **RS 33191** to print. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33266 **Relating to Alternative Animal Protein Labeling.** **Chairman Nichols** explained the legislation aimed to keep consumers informed about new food technologies. The legislation required clear labeling of alternative animal protein that was not derived from livestock production or wild game harvest. **RS 33266** prevented the use of terms associated with specific meat cuts for alternative animal protein products. She noted other states had already passed similar legislation.

MOTION: **Senator Blaylock** moved to send **RS 33266** to print. **Senator Lakey** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Vice Chairman Zito passed the gavel to Chairman Nichols.

S 1242 **POTATO COMMISSION - Amends and repeals existing law to remove outdated provisions.** **Senator Blaylock** stated the legislation was code cleanup. It was submitted by the Idaho Potato Commission and reviewed by the Idaho DOGE Task Force. The legislation removed outdated language, repealed an outdated referendum provision, and repealed redundancies.

MOTION: **Senator VanOrden** moved to send **S 1242** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1243 **Idaho ONEPLAN - Amends existing law to remove outdated references to the "Idaho OnePlan".** Senator Blaylock explained that similar to **S 1242**, this was a code cleanup bill. The statutory references to the Idaho OnePlan were removed due to being a conservation planning tool that was no longer in use.

MOTION: Senator Lakey moved to send **S 1243** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. Senator Kohl seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1241 **ANIMALS - Adds to existing law to provide for the protection of working animals.** Senator Shippy stated the legislation would protect the lawful and long-standing use of working animals in Idaho. The legislation defined working animals and did not interfere with existing animal cruelty laws. It prohibited city and county ordinances from creating stricter regulations than those in state code. Senator Shippy requested **S 1241** be sent to the 14th Order, as amendments needed to be made to provide further clarification.

DISCUSSION: Senator Lent requested Senator Shippy to provide specific issues the legislation would address. Senator Shippy said this topic was currently not a widespread issue in Idaho, as the legislation was proactive.

TESTIMONY: The following spoke in opposition to **S 1241**:

- Dr. Jeff Rosenthal, Veterinarian and Chief Executive Officer, Idaho Humane Society.
- Jonathan Wheatley, Deputy Director, Association of Idaho Cities.

The reasons offered to oppose **S 1241** included broadness in language and the restrictive power it had over local animal ordinances that had become commonplace. The testifiers noted they weren't entirely against **S 1241**, however, significant amendments and further discussions with stakeholders needed to be made.

DISCUSSION: Senator Semmelroth asked Dr. Rosenthal to provide a real world example of the legislation as it was presented. Dr. Rosenthal stated Boise had a four animal pet limit law. If the legislation were to pass as it were originally presented, an individual could house dozens of sled dogs in Boise. Dr. Rosenthal noted that this topic could be addressed locally and illustrated how local governments have changed off-leash dog ordinances. He added that **S 1241** would precede certain local ordinances that had been in existence for well over a hundred years. Senator Kohl asked if Dr. Rosenthal had any amending language in mind for **S 1241**. Dr. Rosenthal suggested specific legislation be created that addressed specific issues, such as a carriage horse bill that addressed carriage horse venue concerns. Senator Kohl asked Mr. Wheatley if he had any amendment priority topics and suggestions. Mr. Wheatley replied that a specific issue needed to be addressed first before a particular focus and solution could be made.

TESTIMONY: The following spoke in favor of **S 1241**:

- Dr. Natasha Laughter, Veterinarian.
- Dexton Lake, Idaho Farm Bureau.
- Brandy Reynolds, Equine industry.
- Matthew Van Tuyl, junior at Parma High School.
- Nalani Van Tuyl, FFA member and freshman at Parma High School.
- Nickolena Van Tuyl, farmer and past President, Carriage Operators of North America.
- Dan Waugh, Idaho Recreation Council.

- Jack Hurty, Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association.
- Tommy Elledge.

The reasons given to support **S 1241** included the legislation would provide a statutory definition of working animals, protect working animals in agriculture, recreation, and entertainment, preserve Idaho heritage, and support Idaho farmers, recreationalists, and future agricultural leaders. Many of the testifiers acknowledged that amendments could be made to address city and county concerns, while still honoring the intent of **S 1241**.

In addition, Brandy Reynolds, Matthew Van Tuyl, Nalani Van Tuyl, Nickolena Van Tuyl, and Tommy Elledge referred to **S 1241** as "Leilani's law", after Mrs. Genevieve "Leilani" Gibbons, who was a major proponent for the protection of working animals (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: **Senator Lent** thanked the youth testifiers for coming before the Committee. He asked Ms. Nalani Van Tuyl for her advice regarding reconciling the conflict between **S 1241** and local ordinances. **Ms. Van Tuyl** replied that some conflicts could be resolved by the proposed amendments. In addition, conflict-resolution coordination with local officials was important.

Senator Lakey asked if Ms. Nickolena Van Tuyl was supportive of further amendments that recognized current local laws. **Ms. Van Tuyl** answered affirmatively, but emphasized the need to pass base legislation to preemptively protect the rights of working animals. **Senator VanOrden** asked if there was an incident that sparked this legislation. **Ms. Van Tuyl** explained several issues occurred in New York, California, Oregon, and Texas. She emphasized that creating a preemptive bill provided protection for working animals before issues were to occur in Idaho. **Senator VanOrden** queried if there was a local incident that occurred. **Mr. Van Tuyl** stated current issues were only elsewhere. **Chairman Nichols** asked if Ms. Van Tuyl was referring to Petition 28 in Oregon, which would ban hunting, fishing, and the slaughtering of livestock. **Ms. Van Tuyl** answered affirmatively. **Senator Lakey** mentioned some concerns about individuals keeping excessive numbers of animals in small spaces and asked if she agreed the legislation could unintentionally protect those that abuse the system. **Ms. Van Tuyl** agreed with Senator Lakey's concern, and explained that local ordinances were put in place for a reason. She suggested existing local ordinances could continue to have authority in conjunction with **S 1241**.

Senator Kohl asked Mr. Hurty if there were examples of neighboring states that restricted the right to utilize working animals for outfitters and guides. He further asked if **S 1241** would secure that right in Idaho. **Mr. Hurty** mentioned that in 2014, Salt Lake City restricted the use of horse-drawn carriages, which was a form of outfitting and guiding. **Mr. Hurty** affirmed that this legislation would protect the rights of his industry and was a proactive approach.

MOTION: **Senator Kohl** motioned to send **S 1241** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Kohl** stated **S 1241's** proactivity was refreshing. He stressed this conversation needed to happen this session due to the evidence from neighboring states and the future challenges Idaho will face. **Senator Lakey** supported the motion and appreciated the preventative approach. Standards could be clarified, preserving both appropriate local ordinances and the dynamic between urban and rural areas.

VOICE VOTE: The motion carried by **voice vote**.

HJM 10

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS - States findings of the Legislature and urges federal lawmakers to prohibit inclusion of artificial sweeteners in school meal programs. **Senator Anthon** explained **HJM 10** urged Congress and the United States Department of Agriculture to prohibit artificial sweeteners in federally funded school meal programs. Artificial sweeteners were zero calorie chemicals, which confused proper regulation of the body. Real sugar was easier for a child's body to process than artificial sweeteners. He described artificial sweeteners were many times sweeter than natural sugar, which discouraged healthy eating habits and contributed to a lifestyle of disease and obesity. **Senator Anthon** noted the growing research that showed some artificial sweeteners affected gut health in children. He discussed how he grew up on a sugarbeet farm and explained Idaho's contribution to sugarbeet production. Not only was sugar an important food, but sugar was an important commodity for the state economy. **Senator Anthon** requested **HJM 10** be sent to the floor with a do pass recommendation.

TESTIMONY:

The following spoke in favor of **HJM 10**:

- Samantha Parrott, Executive Director, Snake River SugarBeet Growers Association.
- Galon Lee, fourth generation farmer and Board Member, Amalgamated Sugar.

The reasons given to support **HJM 10** included prioritizing real sugar and following a national trend. In addition, Mr. Lee explained that sugar had other characteristics apart from being a sweetener; sugar also served as a preservative, bulking agent, and anti-caking agent.

Ms. Kendal Shaber, nutritionist, testified in opposition to **HJM 10**, and stated that encouraging the replacement of artificial sweeteners with sugar conflicted with updated dietary guidelines that called for reducing added sugar and ultra-processed foods in school meals. She stated 20 percent of children aged 6–11 were obese and nearly one in three teens had pre-diabetes, as added sugar contributed to obesity and food addiction. **Ms. Shaber** urged the Committee to reject the memorial and instead support funding to meet the updated dietary guidelines for school lunches.

MOTION:

Senator Blaylock moved to send **HJM 10** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator VanOrden** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED:

There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Nichols** adjourned the meeting at 9:24 a.m.

Senator Nichols
Chair

Rachel Verrette
Secretary