

MINUTES
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Monday, February 16, 2026
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW54
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair VanOrden, Vice Chair Bjerke, Senators Harris, Zuiderveld, Shippy, Blaylock, Wintrow, and Acting Senator Bjerke (Keyser)
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Lenney
- 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:** **Chair VanOrden** called the meeting of the Senate Health and Welfare Committee (Committee) to order at 3:01 p.m.
- PASSED THE GAVEL:** Chair VanOrden passed the gavel to Vice Chair Bjerke.
- RS 33393** **Relating to Public Assistance.** **Chair VanOrden** explained this legislation related to the appropriations this Legislative Session for residential habilitation. It was intended to promote transparency as the Legislature considered increasing provider rates. This would create a review process for increases and ensure provider rate increases were producing the desired outcomes. The legislation would create accountability by ensuring individuals who were utilizing the program were being cared for efficiently. She asserted the intent was to help providers demonstrate transparency in the services they deliver.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Wintrow** clarified this legislation simply created an audit process and did not increase or decrease reimbursement rates. **Chair VanOrden** confirmed the legislation only created an audit.
- MOTION:** **Senator Wintrow** moved to send **RS 33393** to print. **Senator Blaylock** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- RS 33404** **Relating to Naturopathic Doctor Licensing and Naturopath Registration.** **Senator Anthon** introduced his law student intern who would present the legislation. **Elizabeth Marshall**, second year law student at University of Idaho, explained this legislation amended Idaho Code § 54-5905 to allow pharmacists to seek voluntary dual licensure as a naturopathic doctor. This legislation improved access to natural health care for all Idahoans and safeguarded public health by requiring any licensed naturopathic doctor who sought to perform minor procedures or exercise prescriptive authority to hold an active and valid Idaho license. She stated the legislation would not grant any new privileges and restricted the scope of naturopathic doctors to the current standards in code. She specified it was important to note the voluntary nature of licensure and that the legislation would not restrict any rights of current pharmacists who chose not to seek the licensure.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Wintrow** asked for clarification on the difference between a naturopathic doctor and a naturopathic physician. **Senator Anthon** explained the educational degree and licensing was different. He clarified this legislation would allow pharmacists to obtain a voluntary dual license as a naturopathic doctor.

MOTION: **Senator Harris** moved to send **RS 33404** to print. **Vice Chair Bjerke** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33355 **Relating to the Department of Health and Welfare.** **Senator Blaylock** stated this legislation removed obsolete language in Idaho Code §56-1002 that referenced substate administrative regions and directors of those regions. These positions were vacant for a number of years and in light of increased legislative oversight and Senate confirmations of key positions at the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW), the Board of Health and Welfare would be eliminated. Additionally, this legislation addressed duplication of duties by repealing regional behavioral health boards. Powers and duties of regional behavioral health boards would become the responsibility of the regional health boards.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Wintrow** stated she valued the perspectives offered by the Board of Health and Welfare. She asked where the intent for this legislation originated. **Senator Blaylock** explained IDHW was aware of the legislation and a full bill hearing would allow for proper debate on the legislation.

MOTION: **Senator Shippy** moved to send **RS 33355** to print. **Senator Zuiderveld** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Wintrow** commented that she would vote to print the bill. However, she asserted she wanted additional questions addressed relating to statutory meeting requirements for the various boards.

VOICE VOTE: The motion to send **RS 33355** to print carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33406 **Relating to Hospitals.** **Senator Blaylock** explained this legislation would increase transparency for maternity care costs in Idaho hospitals. The legislation required hospitals that provide labor and delivery services to clearly display comprehensive, consumer-friendly pricing for uncomplicated vaginal and cesarean births. She stated this legislation required pricing to include standard services and common additional charges, on a single, easily accessible page within their price estimator tool.

MOTION: **Senator Shippy** moved to send **RS 33406** to print. **Senator Zuiderveld** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33419 **Relating to Health and Safety** **Senator Blaylock** explained this legislation expanded exemptions related to newborn screening requirements. The legislation would allow a parent or guardian to claim an exemption for a child based on religious, philosophical, or conscientious beliefs, and maintained the existing medical exemption process certified by a licensed physician.

MOTION: **Senator Shippy** moved to send **RS 33419** to print. **Senator Zuiderveld** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

H 555

SOLID WASTE FACILITIES - Amends, repeals, and adds to existing law to revise provisions regarding the Idaho Solid Waste Facilities Act.

Representative Weber explained this legislation was a rewrite of the solid waste code. Currently, the two regulatory authorities listed in code were the health districts and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). This legislation framed regulatory authority under the DEQ to establish a single, clearly accountable authority. The bill improved accountability, reduced unnecessary red tape, and modernized Idaho code, while protecting public health and the environment. The bill was drafted in collaboration with the Solid Waste Association, the Association of Counties and Cities, and private and public operators. The health districts and DEQ were also involved in drafting the legislation.

DISCUSSION:

Senator Wintrow asked the reasons for this change in authority and why it would be helpful. **Nate Francisco**, representing Southern Idaho Solid Waste, explained centralizing this authority to one agency allowed for more expertise in the area. Health districts were funded by counties. He explained the majority of landfills in Idaho were owned by the county which created a conflict of interest because the county determined the budget of their regulator. The other purpose of the legislation was to create statewide consistency. Under DEQ, Idaho could have statewide inspectors for landfills. For instance, he explained in his region, there was one entity, to operate the 15 landfill sites within seven counties. Therefore, under the current system, regulation in southern Idaho was different from regulation in central or northern Idaho.

Vice Chair Bjerke asked if DEQ had the bandwidth and necessary funding to administer this authority. Additionally, he questioned the health districts' perspective on the change. **Mr. Francisco** realized resources were limited at DEQ. To remedy this concern the additional responsibilities would be industry-funded. The health districts had user fees associated with the service therefore the industry would generate fees to fund the additional responsibilities. He explained Southern Idaho Solid Waste worked closely with the health districts throughout Idaho on this legislation. There were a few neutral districts but most of the health districts in Idaho didn't receive funding for solid waste. Therefore, they were happy to transfer the responsibility to DEQ.

Senator Wintrow asked what the legislation accomplished in addition to the transfer of authority. **Mr. Francisco** explained the section of code had not been reviewed in over 30 years. In addition to the transfer of authority the bill updated references, clarified contentious language that historically resulted in differing interpretations and updated permitting time lines. **Senator Wintrow** clarified whether the change was in the interest of public health and safety. **Mr. Francisco** explained under the Resource Conservation Recovery Act, the federal government had oversight over solid waste. Idaho maintained sovereignty over solid waste management through the state plan submitted to the federal government. The main goal of this legislation was to clean up the statute and update references.

MOTION:

Senator Harris moved to send **H 555** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Wintrow** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED:

There being no further business at this time, **Chair VanOrden** adjourned the meeting at 3:28 p.m.

Senator VanOrden
Chair

Madysen Crea
Secretary