

MINUTES
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 16, 2026

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Guthrie, Vice Chairman Bernt, Senators Anthon, Harris, Toews, Den Hartog, Adams, Shippy, and Ruchti

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 Guthrie** called the meeting of the Senate State Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.

RS 32969 **Self Defense, Immunity, Reimburse. Senator Zito** introduced this legislation as an attempt to protect law abiding citizens who are lawfully defending themselves, their families, or their property. It would implement early procedural protections and create pretrial immunity hearings to prevent those who are innocent from the social and financial impact of an arrest and a trial. This legislation would also put in place reasonable reimbursements for innocent people that have been financially impacted by this kind of situation. **Senator Zito** emphasized that the innocent should not be ruined by allegations.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Adams** asked Senator Zito if she had an example within the last 10 years to show that this was a problem in Idaho. **Senator Zito** shared a story from last year of a man involved in a brandishing incident. He was found to have used lawful self-defense, but in the end the trial cost his family upwards of \$30,000. She explained the purpose of this legislation would be to have lawful self defense determinations made prior to that point. **Senator Adams** asked if this legislation only covered brandishing or self defense as a whole. **Senator Zito** said it would cover lawful self defense.

MOTION: **Senator Shippy** moved to send **RS 32969** to print. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33286 **Digital Id, Limitations. Senator Nichols** introduced this legislation as a proactive measure taken to protect physical forms of identification and prevent future action that could mandate digital forms of identification. She shared that this would preserve the effectiveness of a physical identification card and keep digital identification voluntary. **Senator Nichols** emphasized that not all Idahoans have or want smartphones, and this would set a clear boundary for those worried about privacy and cybersecurity.

MOTION: **Senator Harris** moved to send **RS 33286** to print. **Senator Adams** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33333 **Sugar Beets. Senator Nichols** shared that Idaho was the second largest producer of the nation's sugar beets and the sugar beet industry was one of Idaho's top economic drivers. She said that in recent years, there has been an oversupply due to the importation of foreign sugars. **Senator Nichols** explained that this was a memorial created to send a clear message that Idaho stood with its sugar beet distributors and expected fair enforcement of trade laws.

- MOTION:** **Senator Bernt** moved to send **RS 33333** to print. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- RS 33369** **Agency Directors, Appointed by Governor.** **Senator Okuniewicz** introduced this legislation as an effort to require those state agency directors who had previously been excluded from this process to be appointed by the Governor and subject to Senate confirmation, with limited exceptions.
- MOTION:** **Senator Shippy** moved to send **RS 33369** to print. **Senator Adams** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- RS 33388** **Licensed Brewers, Sales.** **Senator Bernt** said that this legislation was brought to him by concerned constituents in order to protect small businesses. He said that currently, breweries were allotted one main tap room on site and one remote tap room. This would simply allow for two remote tap rooms.
- MOTION:** **Senator Toews** moved to send **RS 33388** to print. **Senator Adams** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- RS 33296** **Single Countywide Highway Districts.** **Senator Den Hartog** explained that this was a revised version of legislation she introduced at the beginning of the session that would make single countywide highway district elections partisan . The revision would push implementation from 2026 to 2028, leaving the option for those running for election in 2026 to put their partisan affiliation on the ballot.
- MOTION:** **Senator Adams** moved to send **RS 33296** to print. **Senator Harris** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- HCR 24** **FRANK HARWOOD, JOHN MORRISON JR., AND DAVID TYSDAL - States findings of the Legislature and honors fallen firefighters Frank Harwood and John Morrison Jr. and critically injured engineer David Tysdal.** **Senator Toews** introduced this legislation as a resolution that would honor firefighters Frank Harwood, and John Morrison Jr. who tragically lost their lives as well as engineer David Tysdal who was critically injured, by an act of gun violence in 2025. This resolution honors their sacrifice, their service, and their families.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Bernt** thanked Senator Toews for bringing this legislation forward and expressed his gratitude for Idaho's first responders. **Senator Guthrie** acknowledged this tragedy and thanked Senator Toews for his willingness to bring it before the Committee.
- MOTION:** **Senator Shippy** moved to send **HCR 24** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- S 1258** **LIQUOR - Amends existing law to authorize liquor licensure for a distillery in certain instances.** **Senator Shippy** explained that this legislation would allow distilleries to sell liquor-by-the-drink for products that they own. **Senator Shippy** invited Roger Batt, representing Koenig Distillery, to speak. **Mr. Batt** shared that this was affecting distilleries that were not operating within city limits, and who therefore could not contain city liquor licenses. He shared information on how this had created a competitive disadvantage for businesses like Koenig Distillery. **Senator Shippy** closed the discussion by adding that liquor licensing in Idaho was restrictive and this would allow for movement in the market.

TESTIMONY: **Andrew Koenig** of Caldwell, Idaho, representing himself and Koenig Distillery, testified in support of **S 1258**. Mr. Koenig shared that he and his wife were born and raised in Idaho and had been running Koenig Distillery for 31 years. He explained the effect this licensing restriction had in his business, and other small businesses, as well as Idaho agriculture. He shared that over the years, Koenig Distillery has paid millions of dollars in Idaho tax and said that this contribution would continue to increase with the growth of their business.

MOTION: **Senator Harris** moved to send **S 1258** to the floor with a do pass recommendation. **Senator Bernt** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Guthrie** adjourned the meeting at 8:33 a.m.

Senator Guthrie
Chair

Abby Rowe
Secretary