

MINUTES
SENATE COMMERCE & HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 19, 2026

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW54

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Foreman, Vice Chairman Lenney, Acting Senator Merrell (Lakey), and Senators Guthrie, Nichols, Bernt, Zito, Ward-Engelking, 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 Foreman** called the meeting of the Senate Commerce and Human Resources Committee (Committee) to order at 1:30 p.m.

INTRODUCTION: **Chairman Foreman** introduced new page Haeden Carter. **Mr. Carter** outlined his education plans, including studying political science at the University of Chicago and possibly law school at Duke University or the University of Chicago. He shared his long-term goal of becoming a federal judge.

PRESENTATION: **Honoring of Pages Amanda Olson and Cooper Smith. Ms. Olson** expressed gratitude for the opportunity, and said she had learned how much behind-the-scenes work went into the Legislature, and shared her aspiration to become a Senator. She would likely attend Boise State and possibly law school. She was presented with a gift and letters of recommendation from the Committee.

Mr. Smith described his experience as very positive, and said he had learned about the political environment, professionalism, and people skills in a formal setting. He was presented with a gift and letters of recommendation from the Committee.

Chairman Foreman noted that if these Pages represented Idaho's youth, Idaho's future looked bright, and that more attention should be paid to such positive examples rather than negative news.

S 1284 **DIETICIANS - Adds to existing law to provide for Idaho's participation in the dietician licensure compact (Compact). Senator Cook** explained that this legislation would allow licensed dietitians from member states to practice more easily across state lines while preserving Idaho's authority over licensure standards and requirements (Attachment 1). He repeatedly emphasized that Idaho would retain sovereignty, set its own education and testing requirements, and that participation in the Compact would be voluntary for individual dietitians. Those using the Compact would pay fees; the State itself would not. **Senator Cook** acknowledged that the Compact entity would have limited rulemaking authority and, in narrow areas within its scope (for example, its own internal procedures like public notice timelines). Compact rules could supersede conflicting State provisions, since the Compact text would also be Idaho law once enacted.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Guthrie** asked how a dietician Compact had to be funded. **Senator Cook** replied an applicant must apply for the Compact and pay a fee. The fee would come back to Idaho through the Division of Professional and Occupational Licenses (DOPL). There was no fee to the State of Idaho.

Senator Nichols questioned the scope of rulemaking and whether Compact rules conflicted with or would override Idaho statutes. **Senator Cook** said the Compact would not take over Idaho.

Senator Bernt queried whether Idaho could overrule or withdraw from a Compact if it disagreed with future Compact rules. **Senator Cook** responded that could not be done.

Vice Chairman Lenney commented that the Compact was requiring data, fingerprinting, and FBI checks for those who participated. He asked whether the data could be removed if Idaho or an individual left the Compact. **Senator Cook** reported he was not 100 percent sure.

TESTIMONY: The following testified in support of the bill: **Jennifer Scharfer**, President, Idaho Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Lewiston, Idaho; **Serena Aravy**, representing herself; and **Barbara Grant**, representing herself as a registered dietician. They stressed: shortages and long wait times for dietitians, especially in rural or border areas; barriers created by separate state licenses for telehealth and cross-border care; the importance of medical nutrition therapy for serious conditions; and the benefits for military families, and patients who traveled across state lines.

DISCUSSION: In closing, **Senator Cook** clarified earlier misstatements (about California) and pointed to language in Section 9 regarding the data system allowing expunged data to be removed.

MOTION: **Chairman Foreman** called for a roll call vote. **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **S 1284** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ruchti** seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Bernt** stated he was in support of the motion. **Vice Chairman Lenney** explained that reciprocity would be better. He noted that Section 14 on the last page gave him pause with the words "nothing herein shall prohibit."

ROLL CALL VOTE: **Senators Guthrie, Bernt, Ward-Engelking, and Ruchti** voted aye. **Acting Senator Merrill (Lakey), and Senators Nichols, Zito, Vice Chairman Lenney, and Chairman Foreman** voted nay. The motion failed.

S 1285 **OCCUPATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING - Amends and adds to existing law to provide for equivalency between high school graduation and graduation from an Idaho homeschool for licensing requirements.** **Senator Toews** clarified that homeschool high school diplomas would satisfy education requirements for occupational licensure. He cited an example of a homeschooled applicant who had passed all real estate coursework and exams but was denied a license because her homeschool diploma was not recognized. He noted the issue likely applied across multiple licenses and that the bill was drafted broadly so that future licenses with education requirements would treat homeschool diplomas equivalently.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** noted this bill should have been assigned to the Education Committee. The wording should be changed from Idaho homeschools to non-public schools. She queried if this bill should be sent to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendments. **Senator Toews** stated he was amenable to that due to that issue and other items. He cited some of the amendments included changing "Idaho's homeschool" references to "non-public school," lowering the age reference from 21 to 18 where it tied into education requirements, and adding an immediate effective date (per the agency request).

TESTIMONY: **Joel Fisher**, Idaho Family Policy Center, testified in support of the bill, arguing that parents had the right to direct education and that qualified homeschool graduates were facing unnecessary licensing barriers.

Audra Talley, Home School Idaho, testified in support of the bill, noting repeated examples where homeschoolers had to obtain a General Educational Development (GED) diploma or extra credentials just to satisfy licensing bodies.

MOTION: **Senator Bernt** moved to send **H 512** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Vice Chairman Lenney** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

H 512 **ENGINEERS AND SURVEYORS - Amends existing law to provide for the Idaho Board of Licensure of Professional Engineers and Professional Land Surveyors to determine and administer an appropriate open book jurisprudence exam for the licensing of surveyors.** **Senator Guthrie** stated this bill was to reinstate the Idaho-specific open book jurisprudence exam for professional land surveyors. He explained that before 2023, surveyors had been required to pass a 60-question open-book exam on Idaho law. There was a 100 percent pass rate, serving mainly to ensure surveyors knew where and how to find and read Idaho law relevant to boundaries, easements, subdivisions, waterways, etc. **Senator Guthrie** explained the exam had been removed during a broader occupational licensing reform effort. This bill aimed to restore the open-book exam, noting that many other states and Washington, D.C., required such jurisprudence exams.

TESTIMONY: **Eric Stricker**, Idaho Society of Professional Land Surveyors, testified in support of the bill. He explained that surveyors acted in a quasi-judicial capacity and needed at least a basic understanding of statutes, case law, and rules to prevent boundary disputes and to function as expert witnesses.

Stewart Ward, Idaho Society of Professional Land Surveyors, testified in support of the bill. He described the complex, legal nature of boundary work and how errors recorded in the public record could surface years later, affecting multiple owners and causing costly conflicts. He emphasized that surveying differed by state, so Idaho-specific legal knowledge was critical.

DISCUSSION: In response to questions from **Senator Ruchti** about the training requirements to become a professional land surveyor, **Mr. Ward** explained the process.

Senator Guthrie noted that surveyors themselves were asking for the extra requirement to protect the integrity of their profession and property owners. He asked for a "do pass" recommendation.

MOTION: **Senator Bernt** moved to send **H 512** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ruchti** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

GUBERNATORIAL REAPPOINTMENT: **Committee Consideration of the Gubernatorial Reappointment of Trent Nate of Boise, Idaho, to the Idaho Health Insurance Exchange Board (IHIEB) to serve a term commencing April 10, 2025 and expiring April 10, 2029.** Mr. Nate summarized his nearly 20 years in health insurance, starting as an agent and moving into corporate roles, and expressed his commitment to connecting Idahoans with appropriate coverage. He noted Idaho's strong national reputation.

DISCUSSION: **Senators Guthrie and Bernt** voiced support, citing Mr. Nate's experience and contributions on related boards. **Chairman Foreman** stated the vote would take place at the next meeting.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Foreman** adjourned the meeting at 2:46 p.m.

Senator Foreman
Chair

Linda Kambeitz
Secretary