

MINUTES
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Friday, February 20, 2026

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

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

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senators Shippy and Anthon

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 33432 **State Appropriated Funds, Veterinary School.** **Senator Nichols** explained that this legislation would update Idaho's contract requirements for students who were using state appropriated funds for the purposes of attending veterinary school. She believed this strengthened Idaho's return on investment and addressed shortages in agricultural and veterinary services.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Guthrie** asked if Senator Nichols anticipated after printed that this would return to the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee. **Senator Nichols** said she believed it would return to the Agricultural Affairs or Education Committees. **Senator Adams** asked how many hours medical and veterinary students are required to do currently. **Senator Nichols** said that medical students were required to do 600 and there was currently no requirement for veterinary students, but this hourly requirement would comply with neighboring state's current requirements.

MOTION: **Senator Adams** moved to send **RS 33432** to print. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33440 **Governor Authority, Militia Active Duty.** **Senator Adams** explained that this legislation passed the Senate in 2024 but was not passed in the House of Representatives. He said that it was an effort to protect Idaho's armed forces by requiring that Congress officially declare war before deploying the Idaho National Guard.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Bernt** commended Senator Adams for his passion and resilience on this topic and acknowledged how much this legislation would mean to him and others.

MOTION: **Senator Bernt** moved to send **RS 33440** to print. **Senator Toews** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 33426 **Virtual Currency Fraud Protection.** **Senator Ruchti** shared that he worked closely with several important stakeholders when crafting this legislation and said that it established regulatory framework for digital currency kiosks. He explained that other states had regulations like this and that it was important to protect Idaho's vulnerable populations from exploitation.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **RS 33426** to print. **Senator Bernt** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1297

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE- Adds to existing law to establish the Conversational AI Safety Act. **Senator Toews** introduced this legislation as the Conversational AI Safety Act which established a safety framework for conversational artificial intelligence (AI) platforms in an effort to protect minors. Some safety standards would include disclaimers that the chat bot was AI, prevention of points and prize systems that would encourage excessive use, restrictions on sexually explicit content, and allowance of parental controls. **Senator Toews** closed the discussion by sharing that although created for the protection of Idaho's children, it was helpful for all Idahoans.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Den Hartog** asked Senator Toews if legislation like this was implemented in other parts of the country. **Senator Toews** said that it was being addressed in several other states in an effort to protect minors.

TESTIMONY: **Elizabeth Criner** of Boise, Idaho, testified on behalf of Google in support of **S 1297**. **Ms. Criner** explained that AI was a powerful tool for learning but acknowledged the importance of implementing safeguards to protect children during this unique developmental time in their life. **Ms. Criner** shared that Google had proactively implemented safeguards and supported implementation of legislation that could strengthen them. She said this legislation would protect children in the online world rather instead of having to shield them from it completely. **Ms. Criner** said this would hold companies accountable while allowing youth to benefit from the tools AI had to offer.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **S 1297** to the floor with a do pass recommendation. **Senator Adams** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

CONVENED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Guthrie** adjourned the meeting at 8:18 a.m.

Senator Guthrie
Chair

Abby Rowe
Secretary