

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, February 24, 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: 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 Nichols** called the meeting of the Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.

INTRODUCTION: **Introduction of Page - Isabella Froshiesar**, senior at Weiser High School, described her involvement in numerous school organizations, including Future Farmers of America (FFA) and the National Honors Society (NHS), and explained the various office positions she's held. She planned to attend Montana State University to study agribusiness, farm and ranch management, and political science.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Blaylock** asked if Ms. Froshiesar grew up on a farm and what they farmed. **Ms. Froshiesar** explained her dad was a third generation farmer from Germany and their farm produced onions, potatoes, and sugarbeets.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Kohl** moved to approve the Minutes of February 10, 2026. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1283 **AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS - Amends and adds to existing law to provide for the Idaho Direct to Consumer Commerce Act.** **Senator Lakey** explained the legislation was developed in collaboration with the Idaho Farm Bureau (IFB) and stakeholders in the small-scale direct-to-consumer food sector. He explained that the bill established a less burdensome statutory framework for small-scale producers selling directly to consumers. He emphasized that the bill created a defined exemption, while clearly establishing eligibility for the exemption. **S 1283** set uniform standards for small-scale direct-to-consumer sales and prohibited more restrictive regulations by other governmental entities. Small-scale producers were required to provide specific labeling standards and to be familiar with food safety and handling practices, in which education materials would be provided by the Department of Health and Welfare. He added small-scale operators were not considered distributors, nor food establishments.

TESTIMONY: The following opposed **S 1283**:

- Elizabeth Criner, Food Northwest.
- Michael Kane, Health District Directors.

The reasons offered to oppose **S 1283** focused on food safety concerns. **Ms. Criner** was specifically concerned with the various methods of perishable product labeling. She suggested a basic food-safety competency exam, and recommended remediation options in lieu of record keeping penalties. **Mr. Caine** noted that Idaho's current food code only regulated wet foods, such as shellfish and meat.

Mr. Caine raised further concerns regarding liability language in the bill, stating it appeared to prohibit lawsuits based on simple negligence.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Kohl** referred to the bill and suggested that this language didn't appear to preclude other forms of liability and asked whether his interpretation was incorrect. **Mr. Caine** responded that, in his view, the language negated simple negligence, which was a concern for health districts.

Senator Lakey stated the bill struck an appropriate balance by reducing regulation for small-scale producers while maintaining consumer transparency.

TESTIMONY: The following spoke in favor of **S 1283**:

- Erika Sattler, Texas Ridge LLC & Idaho Market LLC.
- Nicholas Purdy, Picabo Livestock Company Inc.
- Hollie Conde, Policy Co-Chair, FARE Idaho.
- John Brady, President, Bannock County Farm Bureau.
- Randal Stoker, constituent.
- Dexton Lake, IFB.

The reasons given to support **S 1283** included personal relevance to direct-to-consumer sales and how **S 1283** would reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens, expand and support local food commerce, lower local produce prices, and increase consumer autonomy. **Mr. Lake** noted the original draft of the bill included a food-safety competency exam, but it was expressed the test would provide a false sense of security for the producer and was removed.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Kohl** asked if local prices would decrease if this legislation were to pass. **Mr. Purdy** affirmed his statement. **Senator Kohl** queried if this legislation would increase food security. **Mr. Purdy** believed that a reduction in regulation could create a positive impact on food security. **Chariman Nichols** understood direct-to-consumer sales were the way food products were sold for many years and asked for confirmation. **Mr. Lake** answered affirmatively.

MOTION: **Senator Kohl** moved to send **S 1283** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Vice Chairman Zito** seconded the motion.

NOTE: **Vice Chairman Zito** commented she had engaged in direct-to-consumer sales for 30 years and emphasized her support for consumer autonomy and **S 1283**. **Senator Kohl** thanked the sponsor and deemed it appropriate for Idaho to lead the way in food freedom. He noted modern food processing was not immune to food safety issues.

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

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Beef Council (IBC) Mr. J.W. Wood**, Chair, IBC, provided an overview of the council's structure, which consisted of 8 gubernatorially-appointed board members. The IBC represented 74,000 farms across the state, 2.5 million head of cattle produced in Idaho, and various other facets of the cattle industry. The beef checkoff consisted of a federally mandated assessment of \$1.00 per head, in addition to a state-specific assessment of \$0.50 per head allocated to Idaho. The Council worked with state brand inspectors to collect the \$1.50 assessment, of which five percent was retained for collection costs. The Council received \$0.93 per head, with the remaining funds supporting promotional, educational, and research efforts. **Mr. Wood** reported that the Council had updated its strategic plan to expand domestic and international demand for beef. He highlighted Idaho's strong presence across all segments of the beef industry. He outlined the IBC's focus on consumer trust, education regarding heritage and sustainability, and increasing

demand for Idaho and Pacific Northwest beef in domestic and key export markets.

Ms. Jodie Mink, Vice Chair, IBC, explained they collaborated with the "Beef. It's What's for Dinner" brand, and on their recent campaign called, "Real People. Real Stories.", both designed to enhance the desirability of beef in Idaho. She noted this campaign was a great way to showcase the Idaho beef industry and Idaho families. She discussed their collaboration efforts on the Albertsons beef training event.

Ms. Mink said they continued to advance their Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certification program to offer BQA certifications in Spanish. She discussed their continuing education unit (CEU) credit options, which allowed individuals to receive one credit at a time over a three-year period. The IBC supported the Idaho Beef Counts program, which supported Idaho families in need, and provided over 2.8 million three-ounce servings of beef since 2010 (Attachment 1).

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Nichols** adjourned the meeting at 8:58 a.m.

Senator Nichols
Chair

Rachel Verrette
Secretary