

MINUTES
HOUSE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 26, 2026

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW42

MEMBERS: Chairman Raymond, Vice Chairman Shirts, Representatives Cannon, McCann, Garner, Nelsen, Pickett, Sauter, Miller, Beiswenger, Dygert, Leavitt, Mendive, Hall (Stone), Healey, Mathias, Haws

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** McCann, Pickett, Mendive

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of session the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

Chairman Raymond called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Haws** made a motion to approve the minutes of February 24, 2026. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Roger Batt, Idaho Grape Growers and Wine Producers Commission (IGGWPC), Legislative Educator, discussed key challenges facing the Idaho wine industry, including winery land use, water supply limitations, and labor availability. Members noted zoning regulations can restrict winery development, ongoing water constraints pose risks to vineyard sustainability, and labor shortages continue to impact operations and long-term growth.

Julianne Germaine, Legislative Affairs and Grant Manager, IGGWPC, outlined 2025 priorities, including expanded outreach through blogs, consumer communications, social media, and media relations. Planned initiatives include a year-long Tempranillo marketing campaign, hosted media visits to the Lewis-Clark Valley, Eagle Foothills, and Snake River Valley AVAs, a 2025 harvest release, a tasting room field trip to Walla Walla, Washington, and 27 educational seminars supported by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant. The Commission reported receiving \$125,000 in grant funding for 2025.

James Nederend, Board of Directors, IGGWPC, and representative of Koenig Vineyards, spoke regarding the economic and agricultural impact of Idaho's wine and grape industry. He described the transition from a single dominant producer to approximately 65 small, family-owned wineries, emphasizing diversification, high-value production, and value-added agriculture. Wine grapes were noted to generate higher gross revenue per acre than many traditional crops while requiring relatively low water use, with vineyards typically irrigated eight to ten times per year. The industry was characterized as complementing existing agriculture, supporting family farm viability, preserving farmland, and contributing to rural economic development through agritourism and local partnerships.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:51 p.m.

Representative Raymond
Chair

Jayne Feik
Secretary