

MINUTES  
**SENATE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Friday, February 27, 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.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Toews** moved to approve the Minutes of February 20, 2026. **Senator Harris** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Den Hartog** moved to approve the Minutes of February 23, 2026. **Senator Bernt** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**RS 33313C1** **Idaho Housing and Finance Association. Senator Galloway** said this legislation was an attempt to increase transparency with the Idaho Housing and Finance Association (IHFA). She said the IHFA was the primary conduit for billions of dollars. These funds included federal housing and homelessness funds as well as emergency solution grants. **Senator Galloway** explained this legislation would require the IHFA to report where the money was going, how it was spent, and what the outcome was.

**MOTION:** **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **RS 33313C1** to print. **Senator Toews** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**RS 33525** **Farragut State Park, Shooting Range. Senator Okuniewicz** shared that this legislation codified a bill passed in 2023 that directed the Idaho Fish and Game Commission (IDFG) to purchase land. He explained that two federal agencies could not agree on a retail price, therefore this legislation proposed an alternative lease agreement.

**MOTION:** **Senator Harris** moved to send **RS 33525** to print. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**RS 33341** **Machine Guns. Senator Kohl** introduced this as a trigger bill aimed to protect the possession, purchase, receipt sale, transfer, or manufacturing of machine guns in the event that the federal ban on machine guns was repealed by Congress or overturned by a federal court of law. He explained it was a proactive measure that allowed for necessary conversation surrounding machine guns.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Harris** asked Senator Kohl if this legislation included rifles with barrels 16 inches or less. **Senator Kohl** said it did not, as this legislation only included guns that fire several rounds without the trigger being pulled multiple times.

**MOTION:** **Senator Anthon** moved to send **RS 33341** to print. **Senator Bernt** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**S 1326**

**PROPERTY RIGHTS - Adds to existing law to establish provisions regarding property rights protection.** **Senator Harris** shared this was a private property bill to protect Idahoans from government employees that came onto private property without permission or a warrant. **Senator Harris** shared that this had happened to him, and he was informed of several instances across Idaho where it had occurred to others. He explained that he had received input from county prosecutors and sheriffs to ensure that law enforcement would not be inadvertently restricted while still maintaining respect for constitutional property rights. **Senator Harris** yielded his remaining time to Russ Hendricks of the Idaho Farm Bureau. **Mr. Hendricks** detailed each section of the bill including a requirement of law enforcement to coordinate with county sheriffs when action needed to be taken, an exception for law enforcement to be allowed to enter property for the purpose of contacting owners, and the government entity's civil liability.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Ruchti** asked Mr. Hendricks if concerns had been voiced by law enforcement agencies about enacting this immediately without time for proper training. **Mr. Hendricks** shared there had been no concerns about training shared with them. **Senator Shippy** asked Mr. Hendricks to provide an example of an exigent circumstance that would be excusable according to this legislation. **Mr. Hendricks** said that emergency situations such as risk to life or law enforcement in pursuit of a suspect would be excusable. **Senator Den Hartog** expressed concerns about the use of drone surveillance and asked Mr. Hendricks if it included in the concept of visibility from a public vantage point. **Mr. Hendricks** said he was not certain. **Senator Toews** asked if rural areas with no trespassing signs could be approached and **Mr. Hendricks** explained his understanding was no.

**TESTIMONY:** **Trent Clark** of Soda Springs, Idaho, **Scott Perrin** of Cottonwood, Idaho, **Shaun Blaser** of Rexburg, Idaho, **Ryan Orme** of Ashton, Idaho, **Jared Morrison** of Ashton, Idaho, **Kyle Jarnagan** of Athol, Idaho, **Doug Barrie**, representing the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, **Darcy Lammers** of Bonners Ferry, Idaho, testified in favor of **S 1326** for the following reasons;

- Idahoans wanted to protect their homes and families from trespassers and unlawful visits;
- Several stories were shared relating to stolen property on private land with no recourse;
- Land owners knew their property better than anyone else;
- The government could not physically occupy private property without permission, a warrant, or exigent circumstances;
- Idahoans often felt unsafe with strangers on their land and should be protected from unlawful search and seizure.

**TESTIMONY:** **Ellary Tucker Williams**, representing the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, **Sara Westbrook**, representing the Idaho Association of Counties, and **Michael Gibson**, representing Trout Unlimited, testified in opposition to **S 1326** for the following reasons:

- The freedom of law enforcement to do their job without fear of penalty or liability;
- Support for the efforts made by conservation officers to enforce compliance;
- Concerns with the civil liability for private cause of action;
- Desire to include the county coroner as an exception for investigative purposes.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Bernt** commended those who traveled far to testify for their passion and commitment. **Senator Bernt** asked Ms. Tucker Williams to provide an example of why a conservation officer would enter private property without a warrant. **Ms. Tucker Williams** shared the story of a conservation officer who came across two people fishing on private property. She said that he stopped them, discovered they did not have fishing licenses, and was able to cite and charge them with trespassing. **Senator Shippy** explained he thought that the story seemed to be a violation of the Fourth Amendment as the two men were presumed guilty and he believed they shouldn't have been subjected to unreasonable search and seizure based on presumed guilt. **Ms. Tucker Williams** said the two men were not presumed guilty, but rather this system was set up to distinguish the guilty from the innocent. **Senator Shippy** asked Ms. Tucker Williams how this legislation would differ from the current standards of Idaho Fish and Game when it came to private property. **Ms. Tucker Williams** explained there were relationships currently built and maintained between Idaho Fish and Game and private property owners would be hampered in their ability to conduct regular compliance checks.

**Senator Anthon** referred to the story told by Ms. Tucker Williams and asked her if the officer involved made an attempt to contact the land owner before approaching the property. She explained that there had recently been an ownership change so the officer did not have their contact information. **Senator Anthon** explained that the issue at hand was property rights versus code enforcement. He asked Ms. Tucker Williams why he should believe that the right of an officer to enforce fishing licenses trumped the owner's property rights. **Ms. Tucker Williams** said this conversation was much larger than just fish and game activities and that annually uncollected fines cost Idaho \$1.4 billion. **Senator Anthon** explained he did not care how much it cost if it was going to cost Idahoans their private property rights.

**Senator Den Hartog** asked Mr. Gibson what the recourse was for an individual whose property had been stolen by trespassers. **Mr. Gibson** assumed that would have to be taken up in court. **Senator Den Hartog** asked Mr. Gibson under current law what the punishment was for government officials who trespassed on private property. **Mr. Gibson** could not answer the question.

**MOTION:** **Senator Shippy** moved to send **S 1326** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment. **Senator Adams** seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Shippy** believed this bill would be good for Idahoans as it clarified the rights enshrined in the Idaho Constitution. He believed this reiterated to law enforcement that private property rights and the private rights of citizens were paramount in Idaho. **Senator Ruchti** asked Senator Harris if state agents came on to private property with a warrant that the expectation was that they stuck to the parameters laid out by the warrant. **Senator Harris** said yes, that was his understanding.

**VOICE VOTE:** The motion to send **S 1326** to the 14th Order of Business for possible amendment carried by **voice vote**.

**S 1286** **VETERANS - Adds to existing law to establish provisions regarding consumer protection of veterans benefits.** **Senator Nichols** introduced this legislation as an effort to protect Idaho's veterans. She explained it would create third-party consumer protection standards for paid, non-accredited assistance for federal benefits to ensure veterans were given honesty and transparency when they sought help. **Senator Nichols** yielded her remaining time to Peter O'Rourke, President of the National Association of Veterans, and John Blomstrom, a member of the Idaho Veterans Chamber of Commerce. **Mr. O'Rourke** explained that this was an attempt to hold the industry accountable for the way veterans were treated while protecting their right to choose how they're represented. **Mr. Blomstrom** said this legislation implemented strong protections in a currently unregulated industry.

- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Ruchti** recalled a past version of this bill that was introduced in 2025 and asked about federal administrative rules that required someone representing a veteran to be acting as an agent or an attorney. **Mr. O'Rourke** said this was a separate portion of the 2025 legislation that addressed the unregulated accreditation scheme for those helping veterans but that weren't necessarily representing them as an agent or an attorney.
- TESTIMONY:** **Greg Pruett** of Rigby, Idaho, testified in opposition to **S 1286**. **Mr. Pruett** shared that he was a disabled veteran and opposed the fact that this legislation limited who he could reach out to for help. He explained that his brother who was also a disabled veteran used a third-party to help him get an increase in compensation twice, meanwhile, **Mr. Pruett** had been denied twice by Veterans Affairs and the Wounded Warrior Project.
- MOTION:** **Senator Adams** moved to send **S 1286** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Bernt** seconded the motion.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Adams** shared he was a veteran and knew several people he served with were abused by the private sector, which was part of the reason he supported this legislation. He believed that veterans should receive the benefits they had earned. **Senator Anthon** explained this legislation was prompted by Chuck Driscoll, a Veterans Service Officer in Rupert, Idaho. **Senator Anthon** explained that Mr. Driscoll had watched countless veterans be taken advantage of by the government and struggle to receive their disability benefits. He shared he wanted to move this legislation forward and continue to support Idaho veterans.
- VOICE VOTE:** The motion to send **S 1286** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation carried by **voice vote**.
- SJR 103** **LANDS - Proposes an amendment to the state constitution to establish provisions for the management of certain lands granted or acquired from the federal government.** **Senator Adams** introduced this Senate Joint Memorial as the first and only protection against the sale of 32.8 million acres of federally managed land. He referred to a letter of support submitted by former Attorney General David Leroy, which included data that showed broad bipartisan support for the protection of public lands in Idaho (Attachment 1). **Senator Adams** addressed the history of public lands, shared that he spent seven months gathering stakeholder input, and explained in detail what language this legislation added to the Idaho State Constitution. He believed this amendment was in the best interest of Idahoans and thought they should have the opportunity to vote on it in the next election. **Senator Adams** explained he spoke with every industry he could throughout this process and reiterated that he didn't write this legislation just for them, but for all Idahoans. He believed every Idahoan was tied to public land and that it should stay in their hands.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Bernt** asked Senator Adams what got him to the point of introducing this legislation. **Senator Adams** shared that he served in the U.S. Military and came back from his deployment in great distress. He explained that he returned to Idaho because Idaho didn't change. He stated he believed God used land to heal, and that he would not apologize for protecting it.

**TESTIMONY:** **Ryan McGoldrick**, representing the Conservation Voters of Idaho, **Rob Mason**, representing the Wilderness Society, **Stephen Thomas**, representing the Idaho Forest Group, **Skip Brandt**, of Kooskia, Idaho, **John Robinson**, representing the Idaho Conservation League, **Viki Purdy**, of New Meadows, Idaho, **Kayla Dodson**, of Boise, Idaho, **Clete Edmunson**, representing Associated Logging Contractors, and **Michael Gibson**, representing Trout Unlimited, testified in opposition of **SJR 103** for the following reasons:

- Concern it would enable land transfers from federal to state control;
- Wanting to keep the Idaho Constitution the same;
- Counties with public lands relied on federal funding for public services;
- Believed federal government managed public lands well and implementing change now was unnecessary;
- Concerns about amendments being done correctly;
- Concerns with the fiscal impact of state management.

**TESTIMONY:** **Nick Fasciano**, representing the Idaho Wildlife Federation, **Braxton McCoy** of Howe, Idaho, and **Dan Waugh**, representing the Idaho Recreation Council, testified in favor of **SJR 103** for the following reasons;

- Protecting public lands from sale and transfer;
- It was a preventative measure rather than immediate action;
- Desiring to keep public land accessible.

**TESTIMONY:** **Erik Weiseth**, representing the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association, testified as neutral to **SJR 103**. He explained that his association was made up passionate individuals on of both sides of the political spectrum but they agreed on two things, the first being that public lands should stay in public hands and second, that the current system of national land management should continue. **Mr. Weiseth** shared his organization supported the efforts of Senator Adams but was not sure if this was the best solution for Idaho's public lands.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Den Hartog** asked Mr. Mason if he believed the federal government had upheld their end of the bargain when it came to managing Idaho public lands. **Mr. Mason** explained he did not think so as many counties did not receive sufficient funds. **Senator Anthon** asked Mr. Mason if grazing rights were secured and intact. **Mr. Mason** said based on his experience this past year, no. **Senator Toews** asked Mr. Mason if he believed the federal government managed Idaho public lands better than Idaho would. **Mr. Mason** said the federal government had a system for public input which did not exist at the state level but that he could not say for sure. **Senator Toews** asked Mr. Thomas if his company currently harvested timber on state endowment lands, which **Mr. Thomas** confirmed. **Senator Shippy** asked Ms. Purdy if she had solutions to improve forest management. **Ms. Purdy** explained she did, and one example would be to salvage timber from forest fires which she believed Idaho currently did not do.

**Chairman Guthrie** commended Senator Adams' efforts to contact stakeholders and do proper research on this legislation. **Senator Harris** asked Senator Adams if he would be willing to send **SJR 103** to the 14th Order for possible amendment to which **Senator Adams** said no. **Senator Ruchti** asked Senator Adams for his intention with this legislation and if he would want to see federal lands transferred to the State. **Senator Adams** stated he was not an advocate for transferring federal lands to the State but his intention was to ensure the land was managed well. **Senator Bernt** asked Senator Adams if he believed the State or federal government would do a better job managing these lands. **Senator Adams** believed it depended, and would have to be determined on a case by case basis.

**MOTION:** **Senator Toews** moved to send **SJR 103** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Anthon** seconded the motion.

**Senator Ruchti** shared he would be voting in opposition because he believed that Idaho could not afford if federal lands ended up being transferred to the states for management. **Senator Anthon** voiced he would support the motion because it would give Idahoans the chance to vote and make the decision for themselves. He said that if given the resources, he had no doubt that Idaho would manage public lands better than the federal government. **Senator Toews** believed the question they should ask was not about whether or not Idaho can manage federal lands. He believed Idaho managed resources very well compared to the federal government and didn't believe they could be compared. **Senator Bernt** explained that anytime a constitutional amendment was considered it was a big deal regardless of the topic. He commended Senator Adams for bringing this legislation forward and supported the opportunity for it to be debated on the Senate floor.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** **Chairman Guthrie** called for a roll call vote. **Vice Chairman Bernt, Senators Anthon, Harris, Toews, Adams,** and **Shippy** voting aye and **Chairman Guthrie** and **Senators Den Hartog** and **Ruchti** voting nay. The motion carried.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Guthrie** adjourned the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

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Senator Guthrie  
Chair

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Abby Rowe  
Secretary