

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Monday, March 16, 2026

**TIME:** 2:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Cook, Senators Woodward, Nichols, Carlson, Burtenshaw, Zito, Ward-Engelking, and Semmelroth

**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 Lent** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 2:06 p.m.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Nichols** moved to approve the Minutes of March 4, 2026. **Senator Woodward** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**H 712** **Education – Adds to existing law to provide for the Idaho State Seal of Excellence in Civics Program.** **Senator Jim Guthrie** presented the bill which would give students a seal on their diploma for having attained a high level of proficiency in civic education. Students needed high grades in U.S. history and government, a GPA above 3.2, and to complete a government project. **Representative Michael Veile** presented the seal was like a merit badge and was a voluntary program students could participate in, they would also receive a red, white, and blue cord to wear at graduation. **Senator Guthrie** closed by saying he hoped the bill would inspire students to learn about government.

**DISCUSSION:** **Vice Chairman Cook** asked about the coursework requirements described in the bill. **Representative Veile** asked Scott Thunstrom, Director of Content and Curriculum, State Department of Education, to explain the language. **Mr. Thunstrom** explained it was two credits in U.S. History and two credits in American government, as both classes were tied to the civic standards. **Senator Semmelroth** asked about the seal and why it was not a special diploma. **Senator Guthrie** answered that it was a seal to show recognition for completing a certain scholastic achievement. **Senator Semmelroth** asked if a student could earn the seal with a special diploma. **Senator Guthrie** answered yes.

**TESTIMONY:** **Joel Fisher**, Executive Director of Idaho Family Policy Center, and **Dr. Samuel Lair**, Idaho Freedom Foundation, testified in support of the bill. They testified the bill would improve civic participation in Idaho's youth and would allow for students to learn their country's government and history.

**MOTION:** **Senator Carlson** moved to send **H 712** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Nichols** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**PASSED THE GAVEL:** Chairman Lent passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Cook.

**H 761**

**Workforce Development Council – Amends and repeals existing law to provide for the consolidation of the Idaho STEM Action Center into the Workforce Development Council.** **Chairman Lent** presented **H 761** which would integrate the STEM Action Center and the Workforce Development Council. **Chairman Lent** invited Wendy Secrist, Executive Director of the Workforce Development Council and STEM Action Center, to explain the intention of the bill. **Ms. Secrist** explained the bill would combine the two organizations while maintaining the evolution of both programs and streamline operations by reducing administrative overlap. She added that once the organizations merged, they would still focus on the separate missions of early education, teacher training, and job readiness.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked what the STEM Action Center would continue to do under the merger. **Ms. Secrist** responded that the center would continue to offer the same opportunities with the added mission of connecting education to careers. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked about the budget and working with private donors. **Ms. Secrist** responded that the donations they received could go directly to school districts through the STEM Foundation.

**MOTION:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **H 761** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Nichols** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**PASSED THE GAVEL:** Vice Chairman Cook passed the gavel to Chairman Lent.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 2:33 p.m.

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Senator Lent  
Chair

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Lauren Young  
Secretary