

MINUTES
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION & DEFENSE COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 22, 2024

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW40

MEMBERS: Chairman Palmer, Vice Chairman Mitchell, Representatives Dixon(1), Holtzclaw, Monks, Blanksma, Manwaring, Shepherd, Crane(12), Handy, Hill, Lanting, Miller, Petzke, Yamamoto, Gannon, Burns

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representative(s) Monks

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 Palmer called the meeting to order at 1:31pm.

H 583: **Rep. Mitchell**, District 6, stated this legislation fixes an inconsistency created after the passage of the voter legislation last year regarding the timeline for proof of residency and obtaining a no-fee Idaho state identification card. He explained, currently the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) requires any new resident to obtain an Idaho driver's license no later than 90 days after moving into the state, but to be eligible to vote, the residency requirement is only 30 days, both requiring the individual to surrender their current out of state identification or driver's license. This legislation will change the 90 day requirement to 30 days so driver's licenses and no-fee voter identification cards are consistent.

MOTION: **Rep. Blanksma** made a motion to send **H 583** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Mitchell** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

HCR 24: **Rep. Crane**, District 12, stated this legislation will authorize the Legislative Council to appoint a committee to undertake and complete a study of traffic corridors of existing State Highways 55, 16, and 95, and potential alternative routes for safe vehicle travel between central Idaho and the Treasure Valley. Rep. Crane (12) yielded the podium to former United States Senator **Larry Craig**.

Larry Craig, former United States Senator, stated he's been aware of concerns regarding north-south travel in Idaho dating back to the 1970's, but said it wasn't until 2006, when **Governor Kempthorne** proposed a new highway to relieve some of the traffic congestion on Highway 55, a law was passed to conduct a study to find an alternate route. He explained, Highway 55 was originally intended to be a Scenic Byway due to the beauty and scenic values driving through the Payette River canyon, not a major highway supporting commercial and heavy traffic use. Mr. Craig continued, it cannot be widened to accommodate the increased traffic use due to the constraints of the canyon, and indicated, although there was a law in place in 2006 to do a study to look for alternative routes, it was never funded. **HCR 24** is very similar to the 2006 study proposal with the main difference between it and 2006 is Highway 55 is now upwards of 500 percent beyond its capacity, which translates to more congestion, vehicle accidents, and fatalities. He commented, he is **in support** of the study proposed in **HCR 24**, because it is critical for all Idahoans to have a safe alternative north-south route.

In response to a committee question regarding the economic impacts to the towns along Highway 55 if an alternate route was established, **Mr. Craig** replied, the study would look at all impacts to State Highways 55, 95, and 16 as well as the potential impacts of a new route, for example, environmental and economic impacts.

MOTION: **Rep. Shepherd** made a motion to send **HCR 24** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote. Rep. Crane (12)** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

H 610: **Rep. Shepherd**, District 7, stated this legislation replaces **H 535**, to correct some errors. He explained, **H 610** has three components. First, it increases the fines associated with illegally passing school buses to deter unsafe driving behaviors. Second, it will change first-time offenses from a misdemeanor to an infraction, with the second and subsequent convictions remaining a misdemeanor. He indicated, reducing the first offense to an infraction allows the defendant to resolve the fines imposed online, by phone, or by email, eliminating multiple court appearances and dropped cases. Third, it will grant the Department of Education administrative rights to the School Bus Camera Fund, which is where fines are deposited, and will be used for the purchase of school bus stop arm cameras, software, equipment, and training. **Rep. Shepherd** yielded the podium to his cosponsor, Clearwater County Sheriff, **Chris Goetz**.

Chris Goetz, Sheriff, Clearwater County, stated law enforcement and prosecutors rarely want to see a misdemeanor for a school bus violation go on somebody's record, and supports reducing the first violation to a driving offense infraction rather than a criminal misdemeanor. He explained, the language in this legislation came from the Insurance Ticket Statute, which outlines the first offense as an infraction, with a \$300 fine, and second and subsequent offenses within five years, a misdemeanor, with a minimum fine of \$600 up to \$1,000, and up to six months in jail. He concluded by stating this legislation also better defines the fines go into the School Bus Camera Fund and the Department of Education will administer those funds.

MOTION: **Rep. Burns** made a motion to send **H 610** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote. Rep. Shepherd** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:04pm.

Representative Palmer
Chair

Tracey McDonnell
Secretary