

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, February 08, 2024

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hartgen, Senators Foreman, Hart, Schroeder, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Semmelroth, and Taylor

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Vice Chairman Nichols

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 Hartgen** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Foreman** moved to approve the minutes of February 1, 2024. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

DISCUSSION: **Chairman Hartgen** introduced Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield and asked if she could elaborate on the meaning of the Idaho Teacher of the Year Award.

Ms. Critchfield acknowledged the Idaho Teacher of the Year Award was the most prestigious honor in the state for teachers. The Idaho Teacher of the Year focused public attention on excellence in teaching that had impacted the students of Idaho. Every year teachers were nominated by their peers, school personnel, parents, community members, and students. There were 300 nominations and 69 nominees were considered for the next round in the CapEd Credit Union Idaho Teacher of the Year. Trent Van Leuven was selected as Idaho's 2024 Teacher of the Year.

PRESENTATION: Teacher of the Year. Trent Van Leuven, Agriculture Science Instructor, Mackay, Idaho, started off his presentation with the need for agricultural education and marketing in schools. He remarked his teaching career began in the West Ada School District in 2009 before moving to Mackay Jr./Sr. High School in 2014. **Mr. Van Leuven** mentioned he grew up on a dairy farm and was surprised very few of his students had ever visited a production facility. Despite the challenges of no funding for field trips, he managed to find enough money to take his 130 students to a nearby dairy. He expressed the number of times he was questioned "why are you taking students from the suburbs to a dairy farm." He stated the kids had the opportunity to experience a dairy and see firsthand the everyday operation. On the first field trip students explored the entire dairy operation and learned about animal agriculture in the industry. **Mr Van Leuven** cited the students had developed empathy for farmers and ranchers regarding the amount of work that went into running a dairy operation. With industry help he was able to continue the same field trip for the next four years.

Mr. Van Leuven reported the need for agricultural students in Mackay, Idaho was a surprise. The local ranches had been bought and replaced with vacation properties. Very few students had any sort of agriculture background which shocked the local farmers and ranchers. He stated the reality was a vast majority of agriculture students and Future Farmers of America (FFA) members across Idaho had no agricultural production background.

Mr. Van Leuven addressed his tour of the Wheat Marketing Center in Portland, Oregon ten years ago. The Wheat Marketing Center (WMC) existed on the technical crossroads of the international wheat industry, providing technical training and grower workshops, innovative research, product development, and crop quality testing services. The WMC focused on promoting U.S. wheat by demonstrating its quality and functionality in Asian noodles, crackers, tortillas, flatbreads, and other baked products. He indicated 50 percent of Idaho wheat was exported and the Columbia Snake River System was the nation's single largest wheat export gateway, transporting over 60 percent of all U.S. wheat to markets overseas.

Mr. Van Lerven concluded with the continued need for agricultural education and marketing in Idaho schools (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: **Senator Semmelroth** appreciated the inclusion of the WMC. She mentioned she and Vice Chair Nichols had the opportunity to tour the WMC in the summer of 2023. She asked Mr. Van Leuven if he had toured the WMC with his students.

Mr. Van Leuven replied it would be a dream to take Mackay, Idaho students to Portland, Oregon to tour the WMC, but as of yet there had been no field trips.

Senator Schroeder commented that the Mackay FFA greenhouse was the largest producers of bananas in Idaho.

Mr. Van Leuven replied he could not confirm or deny the question. The greenhouse produced bananas and passion fruit.

Senator Taylor made a comment on the phrase "heart of an educator". He stated it was what made Idaho's education system so good. Educators like Mr. Van Leuven, who cared about what they taught.

Senator Zuiderveld applauded Idaho teachers for having great hearts and passion for their students. She congratulated Mr. Van Leuven for being named Idaho's Teacher of the Year.

ADJOJRNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Hartgen** adjourned the meeting at 8:17 a.m.

Senator Hartgen
Chair

Melissa Price
Secretary