

MINUTES
HOUSE COMMERCE & HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, March 13, 2024

TIME: 1:30 pm or Upon Adjournment

PLACE: Room EW05

MEMBERS: Chairman Holtzclaw, Vice Chairman Bundy, Representative(s) Kingsley, Wisniewski, Weber, McCann, Cheatum, Hawkins, Healey, Miller, Price, Wheeler, Chew (Beazer), Roberts

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representative(s) Kingsley, McCann, Healey

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 Holtzclaw called the meeting to order at 3:11 pm.

MOTION: **Rep. Wheeler** made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 14, 2024, meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

S 1283: **Senator Schroeder** presented **S 1283**. He stated this legislation amends the definition of "employee" for the purposes of PERSI enrollment to exclude seasonal employees of soil and water conservation districts in positions that do not exceed eight consecutive months in a calendar year if the employer certifies in writing that the position is seasonal or casual and is affected by weather. This definition already applies to seasonal golf course, park, or other positions in cities, counties, irrigation districts, cemetery districts, and mosquito abatement districts.

MOTION: **Rep. Price** made a motion to send **S 1283** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Blanksma** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

H 697: **Rep. Weber** presented **H 697**. He stated with the creation of the State Public Defender's Office, county employees will move over as an employee to the State of Idaho. Employees moving to the State Public Defender's Office will receive comparable accrual rates based upon their county PERSI hours. Employees will be allowed transfer up to 40 hours of unused sick leave. Funds from the counties will be deposited into the Public Defense Fund to pay for unused sick leave hours transferred by each employee.

MOTION: **Rep. Wheeler** made a motion to send **H 697** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Weber** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

S 1294: **Rep. Furniss** presented **S 1294** and invited **Tom Kealy** to discuss the bill in depth.

Tom Kealy, Director of the Idaho Department of Commerce, stated in rural Idaho, existing statutes greatly affect residents. **Kelly Packer** has long been a champion for rural communities, dedicating time and expertise, notably through her involvement with the Idaho Rural Partnership (IRP). The IRP is instrumental in fostering collaboration and tackling rural challenges. Recent efforts focus on amending these statutes, aiming to remove outdated language, adjust existing provisions, and introduce sunset clauses for regular program reviews. A diverse board of 35 members is involved in this process, highlighting the importance of these changes for rural Idaho's well-being.

- MOTION:** **Rep. Cheatum** made a motion to send **S 1294** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Price** requested to recorded as voting **NAY.** **Rep. Furniss** will sponsor the bill on the floor.
- S 1271:** **Rep. Ehlers** presented **S 1271**, which involves cutting a government program associated with the Idaho Global Entrepreneurial Mission (IGEM). This initiative, established by the Department of Commerce in 2012 through legislative action, aimed to foster the growth of local startups and universities. While the program has seen success with several commendable projects, questions arise regarding the appropriateness of government involvement in such endeavors. As a member of the IGEM board, this concern was raised during our recent meeting. The proposal is to remove the program from the Department of Commerce budget, with an anticipated \$1 million reduction.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Wheeler** made a motion to send **S 1271** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Ehlers** will sponsor the bill on the floor.
- S 1303aa:** **Rep. Cheatum** presented **S 1303aa**. This bill involves updating a piece of Idaho legislation from 1982. There was an initial rough estimate made, prompting the development of a calculator. The rule pertains specifically to personal service contracts, such as those for performance or special services, with an expenditure threshold set at \$30,000. For instance, this might apply to contracts with attorneys.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Bundy** made a motion to send **S 1303aa** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Cheatum** will sponsor the bill on the floor.
- S 1299:** **Rep. Roberts** introduced **S 1299**, which seeks to address an issue stemming from Idaho Code 44-2012, as highlighted by a 2015 court of appeals ruling declaring it unlawful. The bill aims to remove obsolete language pertaining to contracts, as identified at that stage. This matter was initially brought before the district court in 2013, with the final decision being rendered in 2015.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Weber** made a motion to send **S 1299** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Roberts** will sponsor the bill on the floor.
- S 1246:** **Rep. Cheatum** presented **S 1246**. This bill concerns the choice for employees to remain in PERSI. This choice applies exclusively to new employees who join PERSI before being hired by the state board, affecting only a small number, typically 2 to 3 employees per year. The crux of the matter lies in the fact that employees hired by the state board have not yet become vested in PERSI and therefore may not continue with it for their retirement benefits. Instead, they must decide between remaining with PERSI or opting for a 401K plan.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Wheeler** made a motion to send **S 1299** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Cheatum** will sponsor the bill on the floor.
- ADJOURN:** There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:43 pm.

Representative Holtzclaw
Chair

Jacobi Van Amburg
Secretary