

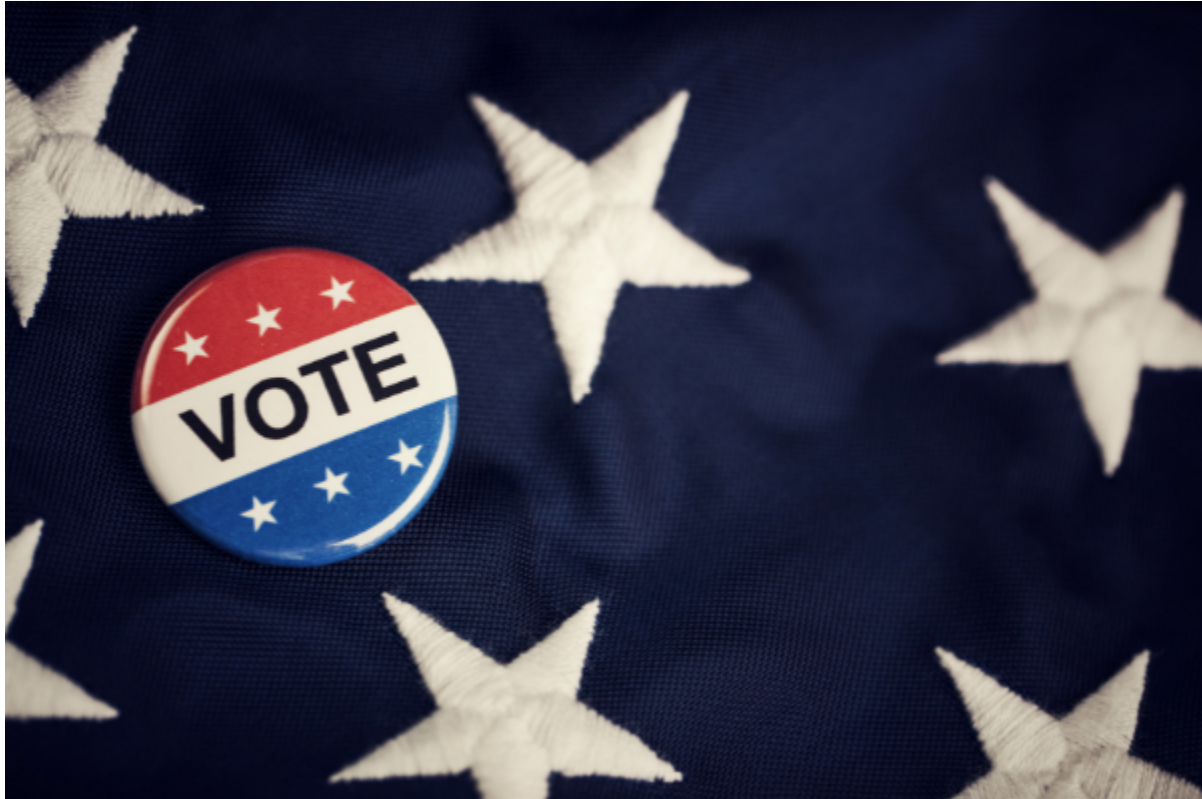
MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Approved AS IS

\_\_\_ Approved WITH EDITS

*\*Text below does not include personal messages or images.*

## LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER WEEK 5 DRAFT



### Senate Advances Bill To Ensure Election Integrity

On Wednesday, [Senate Bill 1274](#) was introduced in the Senate State Affairs Committee. This legislation would require post-election audits of a random selection of counties after a general or primary election. Deputy Secretary of State Jason Hancock, who introduced the bill, stated, "we take election integrity very seriously at the Secretary of State's office." This new legislation works to increase public confidence in election results by randomly selecting counties to be audited according to population. The bill was reported out of committee unanimously with a do pass recommendation.



## Senate Passes Bill Protecting Idahoans' Second Amendment Rights

On Thursday, [Senate Bill 1262](#) passed the Senate on a 30-5 vote. This legislation protects Idahoans' gun rights in the case of a declared emergency. It ensures that firearms be exempt from the section of Idaho code that allows the government to confiscate personal property (such as construction equipment) if needed in an emergency. It also declares that firearm-related commerce be established as an essential service, and therefore could not be closed in the case of a shutdown. The National Rifle Association and Governor Brad Little worked closely with Senator Lakey (R-Nampa), Senator Lodge (R-Huston), and Representative Boyle (R-Midvale) to draft the legislation. The bill heads to the House for its consideration.



## Idaho State Police Budget Adds Air Support for Rural and Remote Areas of Idaho

On Tuesday morning the Idaho State Police presented to JFAC with a budget request for the agency's first-ever helicopter. The director of the ISP, Col. Kedrick Wills, referencing the need for the helicopter, "when you consider how big our state is geographically, how challenging it is geographically, it's really difficult for us to be able to get our law enforcement services to the people that need it most." Idaho is one of four states that is currently without law enforcement air support. Idaho's police chiefs and Sheriffs voiced their support.

## Bill To Help Parents With Education Expenses Passed by 34-1

The Senate has been busy this week with a number of bills related to education. Among them is [Senate Bill 1255](#), which would establish the Empowering Parents Grant Program, a federally funded program that would provide funds for eligible students for computers, textbooks, physical therapy, and other education expenses. The bill is sponsored by Senator Lori Den Hartog (R-Meridian), who testified that the bill "allows parents to really customize their child's education." The bill has broad support, including the Idaho Association of School Administrators, the Idaho School Boards Association, and the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry. The Senate voted 34-1 on Thursday in support of the bill.

## Self-Directed Learner Bill Passes Senate Unanimously

[Senate Bill 1238](#), successfully passed the Idaho Senate on Tuesday. Sponsored by Senator Steven Thayne (R-Emmett), the bill would allow schools to designate certain

students who have demonstrated their mastery of content knowledge as “self-directed learners”. This designation would allow those students increased flexibility to take advanced courses, work part-time, or participate in extracurricular activities. The bill “allows for more individualized learning,” said Senator Thayn, and rewards these students for their mastery and motivation. The bill passed with unanimous support from the full Senate on February 7th.



## Early Childhood Literacy Bill Introduced In Senate

On Wednesday, a bill sponsored by Senators Carl Crabtree (R-Grangeville) and Robert Blair (R-Lewiston) was introduced in the Senate Education Committee. [Senate Bill 1280](#) would define dyslexia in Idaho code, and recognize the unique influence and challenges students with characteristics of dyslexia face in developing their reading and literacy skills. The bill would require that school districts and charter schools assess students in kindergarten through grade 5 for characteristics of dyslexia so plans for specific interventions can be identified and offered. The bill has been introduced and referred to the Judiciary and Rules committee for printing.



*Senator Lori Den Hartog testified before the Senate Transportation Committee.*

## Senate Committee Votes To Reduce Regulations And Eliminate Vehicle Emissions Testing Requirements

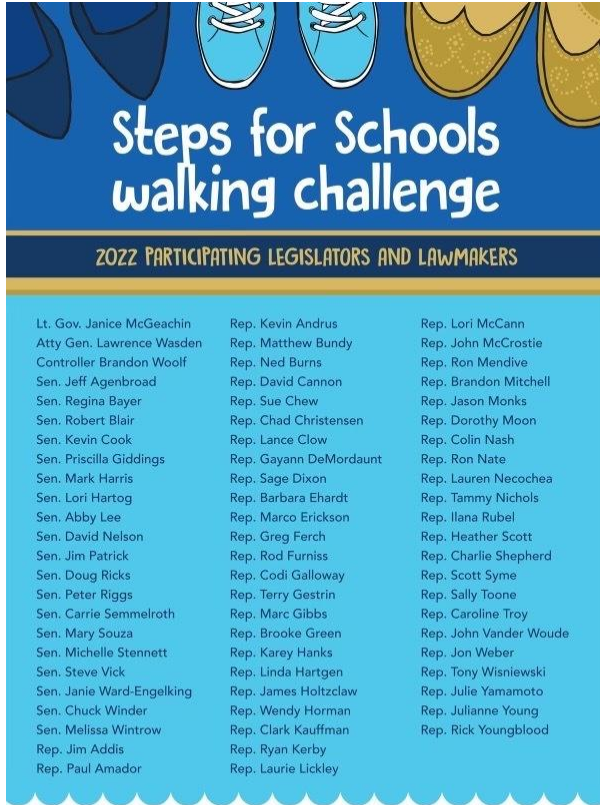
On Tuesday, the Idaho Senate Transportation Committee approved [Senate Bill 1254](#), which would eliminate vehicle emissions testing requirements throughout the Treasure Valley in 2023 and close the Treasure Valley Air Quality Council. Bill sponsor Senator Lori Den Hartog (R-Meridian) argued that the program has outlived its usefulness, “because we’ve done a great job here in Ada County improving our air quality.” Senator Den Hartog testified that older, higher emission cars are being replaced with more efficient cars and electric vehicles and that there have been improvements in industrial emissions. The bill would require Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to annually assess if air pollution levels approach federal air pollution limits.

Supporters of the bill include the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality also testified in favor of the bill. The bill was reported out of committee with unanimous support and heads to the full Senate for consideration.



## Homeschool Pie Day at the Legislature

For nearly 30 years, Homeschool Idaho has hosted a “Legislative Pie Day” at the Capitol. Each spring, homeschoolers from around Idaho come to showcase displays of subjects that they are learning or are passionate about. They also bring with them hundreds of homemade pies to serve to Idaho’s Legislators and even perform their musical talents in the Statehouse Rotunda. Sadly, the event was unable to take place last year due to COVID-19 complications. This year the Capitol was teeming with excitement as the children were able to visit in person with Legislators. Pie Day is one of the most popular days of the year in the Legislatures and is a wonderful opportunity for the children to meet their Legislators and experience the Capitol. And eat pie, of course!



## Steps for Schools Walking Challenge

A record 70 members of the Idaho legislature, Lt. Gov. Janice McGeachin, Attorney General Lawrence Wasden, and Controller Brandon Woolf are participating in the Steps for Schools walking challenge. The program is put on each February by the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health, and it gives elected officials a chance to be active and earn money for a school or school district.

The turnout this year is impressive: 19 Idaho Senators are participating and 51 House Representatives are walking. Overall, 33 of Idaho's 35 congressional districts are represented. Participants can walk an average of 5,000 steps per day in February to earn \$500 for the school or shoot for 10,000 steps per day to earn \$1,000 for the school.

Steps for Schools helps remind everyone how important it is to be physically active during the session and encourages young people to be active. The money donated to

the schools can be used for equipment or to support programming that encourages kids to exercise.

The Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health is a nonprofit private foundation that is dedicated to giving back to Idaho and addressing the root causes that impact health. The Foundation awarded more than \$4.1 million in grants, projects, and programs in 2021, reaching 42 of Idaho's 44 counties.

## Idaho by the Numbers



Governor Brad Little signed the largest tax cut in Idaho history into law. [House Bill 436](#) includes \$251 million in income tax reductions on an annual basis beginning in 2023, and a \$350 million one-time expenditure for tax rebates to most Idaho taxpayers. The signing ceremony was held at In Time Tec in Meridian with several legislative leaders, including Senate Pro Tem Chuck Winder (R-Boise) and Speaker of the House Scott Bedke (R-Oakley).



## Bill Tracker

[H 444](#) Amends 2021 session law to extend a sunset date to July 1, 2023. Filed for a second reading with Do Pass Recommendation.

[H 461](#) This bill aims to update Idaho code 33-4302 so that the child or spouse of a military member who has fallen in combat is eligible for this scholarship, seeing that they meet other prerequisites laid out in the bill. The bill has been referred to the Education Committee.

[H 506](#) This bill would amend Section 33-4302(7) of Idaho Code to allow the Idaho Division of Veterans Services to determine disability for members of the Armed Forces, instead of the United States Social Security Administration.

[HB 436](#) Income tax rebate; reduces independent and corporate income tax rate. House passed 57-13; Passed Senate 27-7-1. Signed by the Governor.

[HB 441](#) This bill offers absentee ballot assistance for those in nursing care facilities by designating three authorized sources of voter assistance. Referred to House State Affairs.

[HB 443](#): This proposed legislation will create a dedicated fund to bring school district employees' healthcare coverage up to the same standard as that of state employees. The bill passed the House 55-14, passed the Senate 32-3 and has been signed by the Governor.

[HB 450](#) This proposed legislation will provide employers with unemployment insurance tax rate stability and consistency by extending the 2021 unemployment insurance base tax rate over a period of two years. This will result in a tax savings of \$64 million for Idaho businesses over the next two years. House passed 69-0. Referred to Senate Commerce & Human Resources and filed for a third reading.

[SB 1226](#) This legislation declares that Idaho students can be designated as self-directed learners if they meet the criteria laid out in the bill. Introduced, printed and referred to Senate Education.

[SB 1239](#) This bill would require the legislative session to end on or before the last Friday in March each year unless two-thirds of each house votes to go longer. A similar bill was introduced last year, but died in the house. Introduced, printed and referred to Senate State Affairs.

[SB 1241](#) This bill makes a change to Idaho Code by increasing the maximum value of a home that qualifies for the property tax reduction program (aka Circuit Breaker) to assist more low-income applicants to remain in their homes. Reported out of Senate Local Government & Taxation with a do-pass recommendation. On Senate Second Reading Calendar.

[SB 1242](#) This bill creates The Empowering Parents Grant Program which will provide funding to parents to help meet their child's educational needs and to address any learning loss with grants of \$1,000 per student or a maximum of \$3,000 per family for public and non-public students. Introduced and referred for printing. Introduced, printed and referred to Senate Education.

[SB 1249](#) This bill corrects an error in last year's H 389 so that expiring Urban Renewal Districts come into local property tax budgets at eighty percent not subject to the eight percent cap. It also closes an unintended loophole regarding the use of foregone balances in property tax budgets. Reported out of Senate Local Government & Taxation with a do-pass recommendation. On Senate Second reading Calendar

[SB 1255](#) This bill creates The Empowering Parents Grant Program which will provide funding to parents to help meet their child's educational needs and to address any learning loss with grants of \$1,000 per student or a maximum of \$3,000 per family for public and non-public students. Passed the Senate 34-1 and sent to the House.

[SB 1262](#) This legislation enhances the protections for firearms, ammunition, and components during a declared disaster emergency. It establishes that those involved in firearm-related commerce and business are essential businesses and services. It provides that the procedures for concealed weapon licenses under Title 18, Chapter 33 cannot be circumvented and that firearms used in otherwise lawful conduct may not be seized pursuant to a disaster emergency declaration. Passed by the Senate and sent to the House for consideration.

[S 1274](#) This legislation would prompt the Secretary of State to order a postelection audit after a general or primary election. This would give the public greater confidence

in election results. This would likely cost less than \$50,000, unless further auditing was needed based on initial results. Filed for a third reading.