

# CAPITOL REFLECTIONS



## Idaho Farm Bureau's Government Affairs Report

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Idaho Farm Bureau Federation Governmental Affairs Division

P.O. Box 167 Boise, ID 83701 [www.idahofb.org](http://www.idahofb.org) (208) 342-2688



### Emergency responders

A bill allowing emergency response personnel from another state to respond to emergencies in Idaho was heard in the House State Affairs Committee this week.

H522, sponsored by Rep. Marc Gibbs (R-Grace), was written to provide liability protection for out-of-state emergency responders such as peace officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and search and rescue personnel when they respond to an emergency in Idaho.

Rep. Gibbs explained that the bill is in response to an incident that occurred in Bear Lake County when an ambulance crew from Rich County, Utah, responded to an emergency call, and then was later sued because it was involved in an accident. Since that time, no emergency responders from Utah will respond to calls on the Idaho side of the state line even though they are closer than the Idaho emergency crews. This bill gives the same protection from liability that Idaho emergency personnel currently receive. A similar bill is also making its way through the Utah Legislature to allow out-of-state emergency personnel to respond into Utah.

This is a concern of many Idaho rural residents, not just those in Bear Lake County, who live great distances from the nearest emergency responders, but may have much closer emergency assistance available just over the state line. This bill will enable cooperative agreements to be entered into and allow for quicker response times and better service in many remote areas of Idaho near the border of another state.

Idaho Farm Bureau spoke in favor of H522, and it was sent to the House floor with a unanimous "do pass" recommendation from the committee.

### Voter identification

Rep. Mike Moyle (R-Star) presented H496 to the House State Affairs Committee this week. His bill would require voters to show photo ID at the polls before voting. Voters who do not have ID would be allowed to sign an affidavit declaring that

they are who they say they are and would be guilty of a felony for signing a false affidavit.

Idaho Farm Bureau policy supports H496. Although we are sensitive to concerns expressed that this will make it more difficult to vote, we disagree. It is pretty difficult to function in society today without some form of photo ID. Any time you use a check or credit card at a store you must show ID. Any time you cash a check, make a withdrawal or open a bank account you must show photo ID. Anyone who does not have an ID can get an ID card from the state of Idaho for \$10. The card is good for four years.

This bill will not place an undue burden on voters and will maintain the integrity of our voting process by ensuring voters are who they say they are.

The House committee agreed and sent H496 to the floor with a "do pass" recommendation. It will now be voted upon by the entire House before moving to the Senate for further consideration.

### Animal cruelty measure

A bill that would make a number of changes to animal cruelty laws, including provisions that provide additional protection and clarification for animal agriculture, was sent to the Senate floor this week with a "do-pass" recommendation from the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee.

S1317, sponsored by the committee's chairman, Sen. Tim Corder (R-Mountain Home), contains provisions that:

-- Provide additional clarification for "normal or accepted practices of animal identification and animal husbandry" that are exempt from animal-cruelty laws. The existing law provides that exemption but does not define those practices. Under the bill, the practices are defined as those practices "established by, but not limited to, guidelines developed and approved by the appropriate national or state commodity organizations."

-- Expand the definition of production animals, which are treated differently from companion animals. Production animals fall under the jurisdiction of the Idaho

State Department of Agriculture after an initial complaint is made. Guard dogs and stock dogs used for livestock have been added to the definition as well as animals that will be sold for the use of another in the production of food or fiber, covering breeders.

-- Create a penalty for anyone who knowingly gives false information in reporting an alleged violation.

-- Define animal torture and create a misdemeanor penalty for animal torture. The bill makes it clear that "torture" does not apply to normal practices of animal husbandry.

-- Make cockfighting a felony. Dog fighting was made a felony a few years ago.

-- Provide enhanced penalties for repeat misdemeanor convictions.

While Farm Bureau believes that changes to animal-cruelty laws are not necessary at this time, we support the bill because of the improvements to the animal agriculture exemption and definitions. Food Producers of Idaho and other ag groups also support the measure.

### Funds for log-scaling

The Idaho State Board of Scaling Practices, an independent state agency attached to the Idaho Department of Lands, has proposed S1355. The bill creates a shared assessment between timber sellers and timber buyers. The change is an attempt to raise enough revenue to retain the board's full-time check scaler. The board has only two full-time employees and its purpose is to enforce log-scaling standards and license log scalers.

Qualified log scalers play a vital role in the timber industry as they measure logs prior to, or at point of sale, to determine actual number of board feet in a load. The independent scalers provide consistent, accurate and honest measurements needed to complete timber sales. The check scaler randomly verifies the independent scalers' measurements and has no relationship to the buyer or seller of the timber.

The Board of Scaling Practices can assess up to 20 cents per thousand board feet. At

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this point, the entire assessment is paid by the timber purchaser. To raise enough revenue to retain the check scaler, the board has proposed S1355, which will equally assess both timber seller and buyer.

If S1355 passes, the Scaling Practices Board anticipates lowering the assessment for both the buyer and seller to approximately 14-15 cents per thousand board feet each. Revenues will be increased by \$125,000-\$130,000, making it possible to fully fund the Board's two employees. Cost is increased by 45-50 cents to the seller of a 3,000 board foot load of timber.

A number of industry groups support S1355. The Idaho Farm Bureau Federation Forestry Committee met by conference call with the bill's sponsor.

Idaho Farm Bureau supports S1355.

**Harassment of wolf hunters**

If you were a legally licensed hunter who successfully bagged a deer would you appreciate your name, address and other personal information being spread over the internet to anti-hunting or gun-control advocates to read and potentially harass you or your family? That's not likely to happen. But change the animal legally taken to a wolf and that's exactly what happened recently. Successful wolf hunter's names were posted, subjecting them to harassment.

Under H531, sponsored by Rep. Judy Boyle (R-Midvale), any personal information -- including names, addresses, phone numbers and any identifying numbers -- related to fish and game licenses, permits and tags would be confidential. This good piece of legislation would protect the privacy of every hunter, trapper, or fisherman in the state and protect them from harassment. Rep. Boyle told the committee that one of government's duties is

protecting citizens, and that's what her bill does. The bill provides for the voluntary release of personal information if written consent is given by the license holder.

The bill also makes it a crime to harass, intimidate or threaten by any means, including personal or written contact or via telephone, e-mail or website, any person who is or was engaged in the lawful taking or control of fish or wildlife. Those convicted could receive up to six months in jail and or a maximum fine of \$1,500.

The bill cleared the House Resources and Conservation committee this week with a couple of minor committee amendments to clarify wording. Only three committee members voted against sending the bill forward.

Lobbyists for news media groups testified in opposition to the measure during the committee hearing.

The Idaho Farm Bureau and Idaho Cattle Association testified in support.