



CAPITOL REVIEW

A WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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BILL SUMMARY

Friday, March 1 marks the 54th Day of the 2024 Idaho Legislature. This past week we heard a new target date to adjourn – March 22. We will see how close our crystal ball is in this prediction. The summary of bills from Friday, February 23 is as follows: the 2024 session has **been a busy time with over 717 new bills prepared compared to a year ago of 507**. 403 bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate compared to 338 this same time last year. So far, only one bill has made it to the Governor's desk which he signed. By this time last year, the Governor had signed 8 pieces of legislation.

TRAILER BILLS

The Idaho Legislature's budget committee has begun to pass "trailer" budgets that will affect state agencies overall budgets. The Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC) had earlier been facing challenges including implementing significant changes to the budget process by breaking the budgets up into different parts and altering the committee's daily public hearing procedures. Some of the committee members did not like the new procedure and had led to them writing and crafting their own standalone budgets that were in direct competition with plans for separate maintenance of current operations budgets. The "trailer" budgets are those added to individual agency maintenance budgets that include many important programs that are funded or provide the authority to spend funds, such as those from federal programs, year to year. The Idaho State Department of Agriculture's trailer bill (S1372) will be voted on by the Senate first and will include a request for spending authority for: a Veterinary Medical Officer (\$215,000); Dairy Inspectors (\$284,600); Seed Lab Personnel (\$88,800); Idaho Preferred Operating Enhancement (\$67,500); Storage Building Construction (\$1,500,000); International Trade Support with Japan (\$60,000); Resilient Food Systems Grant (\$6,184,900); CEC for Fruits & Vegetables Inspectors (\$94,500); Honey

Commission Increase (\$5,700); and Quagga Mussel Resources (\$6,569,900). Food Producers of Idaho supports S1372 and the entire Fiscal Year 2025 budget request.

Another crucial appropriation trailer bill is S1373 for the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC). Food Producers supports the Governor's Fiscal Year 25 budget request for \$1,000,000 for the Water Quality Program for Agriculture (WQPA) administered by ISWCC. WQPA is an effective and successful grant program that provides financial assistance to locally led organizations to implement agricultural best management practices and watershed improvement projects. WQPA's focus is water quality improvement but can also meet a large unmet need by providing funding for water conservation projects, soil conservation projects and small aging infrastructure replacement or improvement projects. Another benefit is it being a proven program with a long track record. Projects can be approved for multiple-years and do not need to be completed in an agency's fiscal year, allowing for quick and nimble assistance to address project concerns throughout the year.

IMMIGRATION & JOINT MEMORIALS

Senate Joint Memorial 2 (SJM2) summarizes the current illegal immigration crisis and calls upon Congress and the President of the United States to take immediate action to secure the border, stop unauthorized immigration, and implement immigration reform to address the national labor shortage. The memorial requests effective border security measures that prohibit people from entering the country without lawful authorization and a revised guest worker program that provides a lawful means of year-round work authorization for participants to support the agriculture, construction, hospitality, food processing, manufacturing, and technology industries. There is little dispute that the immigration system is in terrible shape

and that a secure border must be supported. We also have critical economic and food security issues that must be protected and improved while we address border security. Agricultural employers have led the way in advocating for federal policy that will responsibly modernize our immigration system to provide border security, while simultaneously providing a guestworker program for both temporary and year-round agriculture. A new guest worker program is needed and must be built to prevent a future of importing food by allowing foreign laborers to produce our food domestically. House Joint Memorial 8 (HJM) highlights the current illegal immigration crisis at the nation's southern border and emphasizes President Biden's failure to enforce immigration law. Its main thrust is pointed at the president and the need to secure the boarder. Unfortunately, it also contains inflammatory and incorrect language suggesting Idaho demands "cheap immigrant labor" and is the cause of human and drug trafficking. The memorial calls upon Congress to impeach President Biden for willfully failing to enforce immigration laws and sanctioning an invasion of the United States. It prioritizes border security before funding the war in Ukraine, including passing the Secure Border Act of 2023. It also does not consider any immigration reform measures until after the president is impeached and the Secure Border Act of 2023 is passed. HJM8 suggests that border security cannot be accomplished while also accomplishing needed guest worker visa reform to meet the needs of year-round agriculture. Those that characterize these wages as "cheap" (starting at \$15 and up) must likewise believe Idaho's minimum wage is in need of increase. HJM 8 also doesn't account for the probability of immigrant agricultural laborers being the least likely of all to be involved with the drug trade. Food Producers have opposed HJM 8.

[IHFA DON HALE AWARD](#)

Annually, the Idaho Hay and Forage Association presents the Don Hale Hall of Fame Award. Don Hale was a founding member of IHFA and later served as president of the organization. This year the award was presented to a journalist Lynn Jaynes, out of the Magic Valley. Lynn worked as editor across the sister-magazines of Progressive Dairy, Progressive Cattle and most recently Ag Proud - Idaho. After attending college at Brigham Young University, Lynn farmed with her husband Fred south of Twin Falls for several years, where they raised five children. Being a farm wife was all she ever wanted, but farming forever wasn't in the cards for them. After her husband's heart attack at age 40, they reduced the farm to a few acres of hay and moved south of Filer and went to work at other jobs. Lynn's second love, after farming, was writing. Eleven years ago she married agriculture with writing when she went to work for Progressive Publishing in Jerome as editor of the Progressive Forage magazine. That's

when her "real education" of hay production began – in the homes and on the farms of hay growers across the country. What a surprise it was to an Idaho girl to realize there were growers who never put one drop of irrigation on their alfalfa!

[PESTICIDE WARNING LABELS](#)

States like California and trial lawyers in cities like San Francisco or Philadelphia are attempting to force labeling on the most widely used herbicide for something that is untrue. If not addressed, this will directly impact the availability of these essential products for farmers – lowering yields, threatening farmers' livelihoods, and threatening domestic food security. H653 simply says that existing regulations for pesticide labeling shall be sufficient for a cancer warning label unless a plaintiff can demonstrate in court that they were harmed by the product or that a company withheld important safety information from regulators. This will reduce costly and unnecessary litigation in the future while still providing access to legal remedies and the discovery process for individuals harmed by bad actors. Idaho is home to the only production of elemental phosphorous in the western hemisphere – the initial source of producing glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup®. The ore used to produce elemental phosphorous is mined in the Soda Springs area of SE Idaho. Many agricultural organizations have come to support this legislation as keeping production of this essential product and others alike in the United States it is vital to our industry here in Idaho and beyond. HB 653 should be up for a hearing in the House Business Committee within the next week. For more information, please see the flyer on H653 below.

[AG LAND PRESERVATION](#)

H608 takes the place of H473. This legislation is almost identical to H473 that we wrote about in an earlier Capitol Review. H608 provides landowners with an additional option when considering preserving agricultural land in the state and would add a new chapter to the Idaho Land Use Planning Act if passed. H437 provides the legislative authority for local units of government to receive applications from willing landowners to establish a land use designation, known as an Agricultural Protection Area (APA). A hearing was held on H608 this past week and the only entity that was not happy with the legislation were the highway districts. However, the legislation passed out of the committee and is headed for the House floor. The legislation is sponsored by Representative Kevin Andrus.

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