

Week One

Idaho Works Budget Highlights

Touted as the "most fiscally conservative budget since the Great Recession," a deeper dive into the Governor's Budget recommendations showed the following top priorities:

- \$200 million this year for school facilities (\$2 billion over 10 years)
- Idaho LAUNCH Grant Funding - \$75 million - this program was created last year and is intended to award scholarships for higher education to Idaho graduating seniors, incentivizing them to stay in state and pursue in demand careers
- \$250 million for bridge and other transportation infrastructure, with \$200 million going toward the last one third of dilapidated bridges and \$50 million to bond for an additional \$800 million for other "badly needed" projects
 - \$30 million to ensure a stable water supply and \$6.5 million to continue the strong response to invasive quagga mussels
 - \$25 million for the construction of a secure, forensic mental health facility for the dangerously mentally ill

We will watch closely as the budget committee (JFAC) works through these recommendations and expect contention around both school facilities and LAUNCH funding. The Medicaid budget will likely be one of the most contentious, and is set for hearing February 13th and will be voted on March 7th.

Legislative Temperament

The first week of the Legislative Session kicked off as expected - proposals regarding women's health, library collection development policies, and artificial intelligence were introduced, marking our hypothesis of social highlights being present and popular as true. This week provided a peek into the upcoming weeks and the quick pace of the Legislature that has been anticipated.

The first bill introduced this session, [HB 381](#), seeks to change the term "fetus" to "preborn child".

Senator Brian Lenny and Representative Elaine Price introduced [HJR 1001](#), repealing the Blaine Amendment, which currently prevents government aid from being directed to schools with a religious affiliation. We anticipate school choice will continue to be a focal point of this session and are expecting several voucher bills to emerge in the near future.

Two pieces of proposed legislation were introduced regarding libraries this week: Representative Jaron Crane's [HB 384](#) regarding materials harmful to minors, as well as Senator Geoff Schroeder and Representative Chenele Dixon's [SB 1221](#), requiring public school boards to form a material collection policy as well as a review committee to review challenged material and deem it appropriate or not for public school libraries.

It's important to note that HB 384 was the first bill of the session to contain a "private right of action". This concept was embedded in many pieces of legislation last year, and the business community (IACI) and others have already issued a statement of blanket opposition to **any** bill that contains this provision in hopes of keeping Idaho one of the least litigious states in the nation.

Artificial Intelligence was a popular topic this week, with Representative Bruce Skaugs's [HB 382](#) deeming computer-generated images a crime when sexual exploitation of a child occurs, and Representative Julianne Young's bill, [HB 391](#), criminalizing the use of AI generated sexually explicit images to harass or extort money from the victim depicted. How the legislature will continue to react to the increased use of AI will be interesting, but we anticipate these proposals will and should be broadly supported.

As a reminder you can keep up to date on all legislation introduced, committee hearings, and voting records by visiting legislature.idaho.gov. We also recommend the [Idaho Capital Sun](#) as a fair news source with excellent session coverage.

Important Legislative Dates:

- January 19th - Senate Personal Bill Deadline
- January 26th - House Personal Bill Deadline
- February 2nd - Bill and Joint Resolution Legislative Services office RS Deadline
- February 12th - Bill, Joint Resolution & Constitutional Amendment Introduction Deadline with exceptions for privileged committees
 - March 4th - Transmittal Date for legislation
- March 15th - JFAC target to complete budget setting
 - March 22nd - SINE DIE TARGET

Nonprofit Highlight

[St. Luke's](#) is our nonprofit spotlight of the week. Partnering with St. Luke's for over a decade, we are excited to share their positive impact on Idaho communities. This nonprofit healthcare organization operates numerous hospitals, clinics, and health services in the region, and is the largest private employer in the state of Idaho. St. Luke's is a crucial member to most communities across the state and gives back through millions of dollars in unreimbursed services, care, and investments, as well as tight knight partnerships with like-minded community organizations.

Idaho Fun Fact

Idaho has the most whitewater river miles of any U.S. state, at over 3,100 miles.