



Idaho State Senate

March 2018

SENATOR JIM PATRICK

Dear Neighbors:

The 2018 Idaho Legislative Session is coming to an end and I want to personally thank you for allowing me to serve the people of Twin Falls in District 25. As Chairman of the Commerce and Human Resources Committee, member of the Agricultural Affairs and Local Government Taxation committees we had a busy session! The Commerce and Human Resources Committee heard 60 bills, 47 administrative rules, and oversaw 18 gubernatorial appointments.

This year, we witnessed one of the largest tax cuts in Idaho's history. This \$200 million-plus tax relief was passed in the Senate with a 26 - 9 vote and was signed into law by Governor Otter on March 12. The purpose of the bill is to reduce personal income and corporate tax rates. In addition, a \$130 Idaho child tax credit will be given. The bill's aim is to offset the increase in taxes Idaho families would pay under the new tax plan signed by President Trump. Also, under consideration is a follow-up bill, which would add \$25 million in cuts by expanding a child tax credit.

This spring I served on the Advisory Board for the Industrial Commission for workers' compensation. In our meetings we discussed timely payments of benefits for injuries on-the-job and considered coverage concerning PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) for our police and firefighters—a real concern that is difficult to define and treat.

The Senate voted 26-7 on H 547 which addresses building codes; the bill is headed to the Governor's desk for consideration. Currently, building codes are implemented by counties and cities. As builders must comply within their respective jurisdictions, this bill was amended to unify building codes throughout the State.

This summer, I will co-chair a working group which will study a \$235 billion industry. This Pharmacy Benefit Manager's (PBM) proposed legislation would help lower the costs of pharmaceutical prescriptions. Currently, PBM "gag clauses" restrict pharmacists from disclosing price options for medical prescriptions to patients. These commercial contracts between a pharmacy and the PBM is a distributor and sales chain that lacks transparency. In many cases, the pharmacist is prohibited by contract to inform the patients the drugs they have been prescribed have lower-cost alternatives. In addition, doctors are in the dark as to which drugs are cheaper--brand versus generic, and if they are covered by the insurance policy.

Additionally, H 533 has passed both the House and Senate. This legislation aims to increase the amount the State of Idaho pays counties which house State inmates in their county correctional facilities. The amount will increase from \$45 to \$55 per day for the first seven days. The amount increases to \$75 per day after seven days. This legislation grew out of concern the

counties were paid less than the cost to house these State inmates. This bill was sent to the Governor's desk for consideration.

As a farmer and member of the Agricultural Affairs Committee, agriculture is a particular interest of mine. I have the privilege of serving on the Advisory Board of the University of Idaho's College of Agriculture and learning more about their operations. The college's research centers are in need of infrastructure investment and dairy research and the instructional center near Jerome is closer to becoming a reality.

In Committee, we heard a presentation from the Amalgamated Sugar Company (ASC), an Idaho-based, grower-owned cooperative. ASC is the second-largest sugar processor in the United States, with 750 members. The company aims to educate the community about the benefits of genetic engineering and technological advances in sugar beets. Sugar is a major industry in our area and a billion-dollar industry in Idaho. Using ASC's practices, farmers are 63 percent more productive per acre, producing 76 more pounds of sugar per acre and using fewer pesticides. Additionally, farmers use 60 percent less diesel fuel, as less tillage of the soil is needed.

This spring, I had the honor of co-sponsoring workforce development legislation, namely H 432. This legislation addresses the short supply of trained and skilled employees in the State's workforce. The aim is to use the Workforce Development Training Fund (WDTF) for career education and outreach on workforce training opportunities. The Idaho Workforce Development Council (WDC) offers guidance and oversight for the State's workforce. Members of the WDC represent businesses, education, government, and community-based organizations. The WDC's purpose is to advise the Governor and the State Board of Education as to the strategies needed for the development of high-quality workforce investment to benefit businesses and those seeking employment alike. H 432 passed both the House and the Senate and is now awaiting the signature of the Governor.

The Governor commented, "employers, economic development leaders, and educators agree that educating and training more skilled workers is crucial to continuing the kind of growth that Idaho has been enjoying in recent years. We need thousands of additional employees who are prepared for the increasingly technical jobs being created by Idaho business. That means investing both in academic jobs and workforce training as we pursue our K through 12 career approaches to education excellence."

I appreciate your attention to this message. I want to stay connected with you and I value your thoughts, opinions, and questions. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email at jpatrick@senate.idaho.gov and phone at 208-332-1318 or 208-733-6897.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Patrick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jim