

# Idaho Academy of Family Physicians

## 2021 Legislative Report

Week 1 January 11 – January 15

### **Welcome to the 2021 Idaho Legislative session!**

The 2021 legislative session convened on Monday, January 11, 2021 with Governor Little delivering his State of the State Address.

Unlike most states, the state of Idaho comes into this session with a healthy budget surplus above what the legislature had predicted for the fiscal year. At a record \$630 million, the surplus is five times larger than expected and is an indication that the economy of the state is doing quite well despite the pandemic.

Governor Little outlined a number of priorities that includes providing one-time (and some ongoing) tax relief, more fully funding education, and focusing some of the surplus on some badly needed infrastructure projects.

The Legislature responded by demonstrating their priority is to curb the power of the Governor and give themselves greater input in declaring disasters, implementing public health restrictions, and spending federal emergency funds.

### **Governor Little's State of the State address**

In his address, the Governor outlined his key policy and budget priorities for this coming year. Key priorities include continuing his efforts to strengthen education, provide tax relief, and invest in infrastructure such as transportation, law enforcement, broadband, and agriculture and water.

The Governor reflected on this past year and the many hardships Idahoans, along with the country have faced. In doing so, he acknowledged lives lost and thanked healthcare workers, educators, first responders, and Idahoans for their resiliency during these unprecedented times.

The Governor noted that Idaho has a record budget surplus and he plans to keep on this economic trajectory. Further stating, that Idaho ranks first for financial solvency and personal income growth; indicating that Idaho's economy is booming in part due to the regulatory rollbacks.

In speaking to his COVID-19 pandemic response, the Governor highlighted ways in which Idaho's economy prospered. His economic rebound plan provided over \$300 million in small business grants, lowered unemployment insurance taxes, provided property tax relief to property tax payers, and strengthened Idaho's broadband infrastructure. His pandemic response also included removing additional regulatory burdens such as lifting certain telehealth regulations and licensing more nursing professionals to aid in the fight against COVID-19.

Governor Little announced his plans for a "no frills" FY 2022 budget this year with only a 3.77 percent increase over this year. The lean budget includes a prudent surplus, strengthening our rainy funds, funding for education, increased investments to reduce fire risk, investments to address Idaho's physician shortage, and funding to address additional COVID-19 costs.

Governor Little announced his new plan, Building Idaho's Future. The plan includes his top policy and budget priorities for the 2021 legislative session, with an emphasis on education, transportation, law enforcement, and Idaho's agriculture and water infrastructures. The Governor also is proposing both one-time and ongoing tax relief - \$455 million total with \$115 million to conform Idaho's tax laws with the federal government.

### **Key priorities of interest to IAFP**

COVID relief – The Governor's recommendation includes \$250 million to bolster the state's public health infrastructure to continue responding to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

Medicaid Expansion- The Governor recommends a \$22.5 million cost-share with the counties to capture the savings counties have realized under Medicaid expansion.

Idaho Physician Shortage- The governor's budget includes \$900 million for 15 new residents and continue implementation of the 10-year Graduate Medical Education plan.

## Health and Welfare Committees

The Senate Health and Welfare committee held an organizational meeting and began their annual rules review process. Senator Fred Martin remains the Chairman of that committee and new Senator Peter Riggs is Vice-Chairman (Peter Riggs' father Jack Riggs is a former Senator, Lt. Governor, and Medical Doctor).

The House Health and Welfare committee did not meet this first week. Fred Wood remains chairman of that committee and John VanderWoude is Vice-Chairman. The House committee has three new freshman legislators among its members.

## New Legislation Introduced this week:

### **H 0001: Disasters, Governor's Powers**, by Rep. Jason Monks

This bill ensures that all Idahoans have the right to work, provide for their families, and contribute to the economy during any emergency disaster declaration. It limits the length of an emergency disaster declarations to 30 days unless extended by a resolution of the legislature. Ensures the right to assemble for worship. And terminates all disaster declarations that have existed for more than 30 days.

*Status: introduced in House State Affairs Committee on January 12, awaiting hearing*

### **HCR 001\*: Disaster Declaration Ended**, by Rep. Heather Scott

This concurrent resolution ends the existing state of disaster emergency in the state.

*Status: introduced in House State Affairs committee on January 12, awaiting hearing*

### **HCR 002\*: Gatherings, Group size**, by Rep. Brent Crane

Eliminates the restrictions of gatherings limited to 10 or more people under the Governor's Emergency Disaster Declaration.

*Status: introduced in House State Affairs Committee on January 13, awaiting hearing.*

**S1001: Disaster, definition:** by Senate GOP Leadership

Clarifies the definition of the word “disaster”, deletes the word “during” and replaces it with “arising out of” in order to address funding allocation into the Disaster Emergency Account.

*Status: Introduced in Senate State Affairs Committee on January 13, awaiting hearing*

**S1002: Disaster, payments:** by Senator Chuck Winder

Intent is to ensure an emergency declaration may end while preserving the state’s ability to continue receiving funds to assist in the state’s recovery to such disaster.

*Status: Introduced in Senate State Affairs committee on January 13, awaiting hearing.*

**S1003: Martial law, Governor’s Authority,** by Sen Chuck Winder and Speaker Scott Bedke

Renames extreme emergencies as extreme peril; limits application to human caused conditions; prohibits restrictions on the right to work; limits duration of extreme peril and sets parameters for extension; prohibits limiting or suspending the rights of citizens; prohibits suspension of statutes by the Governor.

*Status: introduced in Senate State Affairs Committee January 13, awaiting hearing*

**SCR 101\*:** Disaster emergency terminated, by Sen. Chuck Winder and Senate GOP leadership

Would immediately terminate the COVID-19 Emergency Orders issued by the Governor while maintaining declarations necessary to keep federal funding available for Idaho’s military, first responders, health care providers, and communities.

*Status: Introduced in Senate State Affairs Committee January 13, awaiting hearing.*

\*Note: Concurrent Resolutions (HCR, SCR) express the will of the legislature and do not require the signature of the Governor (thus he cannot VETO either). There is some question the real impact if these resolutions pass the legislature.

We look forward to working with the Idaho Academy of Family Physicians during this legislative session. We will continue to track activity of interest to IAFP and provide weekly reports throughout the session. We stand ready to answer any questions you may have.

Thanks,  
Ken Burgess, Partner  
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