Special legislative session to address election, civil liability during the pandemic

Wednesday August 19, 2020

Boise, Idaho – Governor Brad Little issued a proclamation today outlining the issues to be considered by the Idaho Legislature during a special legislative session convening on Aug. 24.

The Governor's proclamation calls for a special legislative session to address the COVID-19 pandemic in Idaho, including election law changes that are needed in order to facilitate a safe and secure November election during the pandemic.

It also calls for the Legislature to establish temporary and consistent standards for civil liability related to COVID-19 that will help Idaho's economy recover in a safe and responsible manner while encouraging careful planning, care and safety in responding to the pandemic.

Full details on the bills to be considered are outlined in the **Governor's proclamation here** (https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/proclamation_special-session.pdf).

Each of the topics chosen for the special session were recommended by the Idaho Legislature after study and analysis by legislative working groups that identified the topics and recommended each to the Governor for consideration.

The Idaho Constitution gives the Governor the authority to call a special legislative session, and the Governor is required to specify the subjects for consideration. Special legislative sessions by law are of a limited duration and by recent tradition last only a day or two.

"Special legislative sessions by their very nature are intended to deal with time sensitive issues that require immediate legislative action and cannot wait until the general session in January," Governor Little said.

Governor Little chose not to include two legislative proposals in his proclamation – one related to public health district authorities and another on education funding. Governor Little said further discussion on both topics is merited, and public discourse will continue during the general legislative session beginning in January. Both topics do not require immediate action by the Legislature at this time.

Governor Little said the valuable advice and counsel of public health officials should continue to inform school officials' decisions on safe school operations during the pandemic. Governor Little supports school leaders and public health officials continuing to work closely together on the safe reopening of schools.

Governor Little provided public schools a budget roadmap in May to provide certainty and set a clear course ahead of their budget-setting and negotiations. Education funding flexibility and other K-12 budget issues undoubtedly will be addressed in January during the general session, but new legislation at this point could create uncertainty for school administrators as they execute their safe reopening plans.

"We owe it to taxpayers to pull off a swift and successful special legislative session. I appreciate the work our legislators put into the proposals for a special session and for their willingness to come to Boise next week and address these issues on behalf of the people we serve," Governor Little said.

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