

# 2024 Legislative Update

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## 2024 Legislative Update

PFFI Legislative Update, February 17, 2024

As we pass what is hopefully the middle of the legislative session, and as our 2024 Convention approaches, I wanted to send out an update from the PFFI Lobby Team. Your PFFI Lobby team has been working diligently against foes from all over the country as we see many more anti-union bills than usual introduced this year. We have successfully mired down many bad bills with the help of some of our courageous friends that hold committee chairs, but with unreal political pressure from the far right in some leadership positions and the State party, some are sure to be pulled out of the drawers and run. Here is a summary of the legislation we are watching and working on, depending on status, and my take on their future.



**H 389 Fire Code Violations, misdemeanor, Sponsor Rep. Kenny Wroten (R-13B).** Wroten is running this as a favor to the state fire marshal's office. It would put into statute what is currently only in rule, that consistent violations by sub/contractors of the adopted IFC may be considered a misdemeanor given certain circumstances. We were asked by Wroten to give our two cents on overreach vs. enforceability. We are staying neutral since it is not a PFFI issue, but I recommended he bring the state fire marshal's office and the builders, who are adamantly opposed to the bill, together and force them to bring you something you can run. Currently, it is being held in House Business, and I assume it will die there, as both Crane brothers are on that committee, and they would be subject to the law if it were to be placed there. **PFFI→ NEUTRAL**

**S 1254 Firefighter's Day, Sponsor, Sen. Chris Trakel, (R-11).** This bill would make a "holiday" for firefighters within the state of Idaho. Although he argues it is not simply a day to honor firefighters, that is all the language does. There is no pay, no day off, just a day to honor firefighters. We are going to oppose this bill. Senator Trakel is not a supporter of ours, but this seems to be a bill he is running to vote a certain way where the public rarely researches against public safety, while being able to campaign that he supports public safety, because, well, "look, I made them a day." We have asked Chairman Guthrie to hold it indefinitely, and so far he has. He said we will talk again if he gets pressure to run it. **PFFI→ OPPOSE**

**S 1255 Peace Officer's Day, Sponsor, Sen. Chris Trakel, (R-11).** Same as 1254, but for cops. FOP is against it but won't spend any time arguing. Paul Jagosh with Idaho FOP relates that they already have two days in Idaho that honors police officers, and they do not need another. PFFI will oppose it for the same reasons as S 1254. **PFFI→ OPPOSE**

**S 1259 Bargaining, secret ballots, Sponsor, Brian Lenny, (R-13).** This bill is a poorly organized and incorrectly aimed (attempting to amend IC Title 72, which is the work comp code section) attack on unions that attempts to decertify unions due to a lack of willing members. The language insinuates that people are forced or pressured to sign cards or continue their membership and would remove simple card-check votes or certification and require an election by secret ballot by the Director of the Department of Labor or School District, etc., to prove a 50%+1 before any contract negotiations can occur. The language shoots broadly at all unions, but includes language that would render it unenforceable on private sector unions due to the precedence of the National Labor Relations Act when it comes to voting for representation by a Union. I discussed this with DVP Walsh, and the way the IAFF performs votes mirrors the NLRA process. So, once again, it is aimed primarily at teachers. If there isn't a 50%+1, the employer would no longer have to negotiate a contract. Our Fire Unions are generally in the 98%-100% representation and they know this, and it doesn't apply to private sector unions, so cops and teachers are the real victims here. So far, we have been able to convince Chairman Cook (R-32) to hold this bill. It could come out at any time since he is under censure x 4 counts by the state of Idaho GOP. I gave him a list of counter-points as reasons to hold it, but there are elections coming and censure means no money from the party for them. **PFFI→OPPOSE**

**S 1315 PERSI, reemployment, Sponsor Jim Guthrie (R-28).** This bill seeks to repeal 2023's S 1054 language which created our current return-to-work. Please keep reading! We are in support of this action. So far, zero firefighter members have used this code section and 19 others have. Of those 19 are the Nampa police chief, a Nampa deputy (police) chief, and two senior police officers. All four have violated the spirit, and in at least two cases, the letter of the law. The last two that I know of were guaranteed re-hire, kept their seniority, their work schedule, the spot on their team, and their rank. The code violation is the guarantee of work: it is not allowed and Nampa Police Chief Huff himself told me he gave those two senior officers a "conditional offer of employment" and "made them wait 35 days so it didn't look bad." However, he also called this time a vacation for them, or a "mini-sabbatical." So, long story kinda short, we are in favor of repeal. Some of our members make \$35,000 per year as professionals, and they will be paying more into PERSI on July 1st so Nampa's police chief can make an estimated \$270,000 per year as police chief between his salary and PERSI retirement benefit. We feel this is wrong. Although we are in favor of a full repeal, the Fire Chiefs and the Police Chiefs are working diligently to provide Chairman Guthrie with a bill he can stomach with certain sideboards; otherwise, he will just run it for a full repeal. We will support whatever Guthrie agrees to that will hopefully remove the PERSI increase necessary on July 1 or at least limit future increases. **PFFI→SUPPORT**

**H 602 Taxpayer Funds, teachers unions. Sponsor Rep. Hawkins, (R-2B).** This is a bill that we've been working to kill before the session even started. This bill seeks to eliminate all teachers union activities under the guise that taxpayer money goes to subsidize teachers unions. This is a national Freedom Foundation (Olympia, WA) bill that has been, and continues to be run all over the country. It is currently being run in Utah, (H.B. 285). It seeks to define many, many activities as "union activities," then proceeds to forbid them all, and actually allows for civil penalties, but the latest draft includes civil penalties against "public officials" which is currently undefined. The old draft allowed anyone to sue a teacher for either \$500, \$2,000, or \$5,000 given certain circumstances for violations. We have a coalition built to kill this with Idaho Education Association, PFFI, Idaho FOP, and Idaho AFL-CIO, but I feel as though we are doing most of the work on this. Due to the nationwide experience with this bill, we know that if we allow the teachers to be taken down this year, we will be on the menu next year. We will be working with our friends in the legislature to not only vote this down but send a message that this legislation is not welcome here. (Unfortunately, it seems to be welcome here). **PFFI→OPPOSE**

**H 605 Labor Unions, notice. Sponsor Rep. Jacyn Gallagher, (R-9A).** I have put out feelers but I do not know what this is yet. **PFFI→THIS PROBABLY SUCKS ALSO**

Your Lobby team started the year learning the vast history of the Fireman's Retirement Fund, and began exploring how the Fire Insurance Premium Tax was enveloped into it. We have over 500 pages of House and Senate committee minutes, testimony, bills, and interim committee notes to read and digest and we will continue to do so, but these anti-union bills will last until the end of the session. Fortunately, with these bills coming out, we really will know who supports us during the upcoming election season. We will be adamant about our members taking part in the elections this year since many chairmen and women have gone to the mat for us already, possibly at the expense of their Chair and maybe even their seat in the Legislature. Off the top of my head:

**Representative Julie Yamamoto (R-11A), Chair, House Education.** She would not hear the anti-teacher bill. She was sort-of threatened by the Freedom Foundation (second-hand information) to hear the bill but held strong. She will need money and manpower to stay in the legislature let alone her Chair position.

**Senator Kevin Cook (R-32), Chair, Senate Commerce and Human Resources.** He is currently holding an anti-union bill brought by Tammy Nichols, and is also holding S 1259. As I said, he is up on 4 counts of violating the State GOP platform and they could strip his ability to run as a Republican which is a campaign death sentence for him.

**Senator Dave Lent (R-33), Chair, Senate Education.** Also would not hear the anti-teacher bill. He told me that he was pressured by Brody Aston (the contract lobbyist for Freedom Foundation) and a representative from the Freedom Foundation and he completely lost his cool with them due to their condescending attitudes and disrespect of the teaching profession. Ask me some time about the lobbyist mentioned above.

All three of these Chairmen will be targeted hard by the Idaho Freedom Foundation, the Freedom Foundation, ALEC, Mountain States Policy Center, and all the other "think tanks" out there seeking to destroy Unions across America. They are superbly funded and send out messaging that paints horrible pictures of moderate and not-so-moderate republicans with outright lies and bent truths. But what we have is Local donors and our members who MUST be willing to get out and walk neighborhoods for our friends in the legislature. Plant the seeds for the upcoming primary season. We must show up!

Fraternally, Shaun

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