

2025 Legislative Session Preview

The Legislature convened last week for Organizational Session, resulting in an entirely new Senate Leadership slate, two new House Leadership members, and a shuffle in committee chairmen and committee makeup.

Leadership

House

Speaker: Mike Moyle
Majority Leader: Jason Monks
Assistant Majority leader: Josh Tanner
Majority Caucus Chair: Jaron Crane

Minority Leader: Ilana Rubel
Assistant Minority Leader: Steve Berch
Minority Caucus Chair: Todd Achilles

Senate

President Pro Tempore: Kelly Anthon
Majority Leader: Lori Den Hartog
Assistant Majority Leader: Mark Harris
Majority Caucus Chair: Ben Toews

Minority Leader: Melissa Wintrow
Assistant Minority Leader: James Ruchti
Minority Caucus Chair: Janie Ward-Engelkig

The Idaho House saw a slight turnover in leadership, with Representatives Josh Tanner (LD 14 – Eagle) and Jaron Crane (LD 12 – Nampa) entering the mix. Their new positions will continue to uphold the strong conservative presence in the Idaho House.

In the Senate, the result of two vacancies was an entire new leadership makeup, with Senators Kelly Anthon (LD 27 – Burley) and Mark Harris (LD 35 – Soda Springs) shifting up from Majority Leader and Caucus Chair to Pro Tem and Assistant Majority Leader, respectively. Senator Lori Den Hartog (LD 22 – Meridian) had a successful bid for Majority Leader and is joined by Caucus Chair Senator Ben Toews (LD 4 – Coeur d'Alene) as the newest members of leadership.

Minority Leadership saw a couple changes in the House side due to two vacancies, which are now roles occupied by Representatives Steve Berch (LD 15 – Boise) and Todd Achilles (LD 16 – Boise).

Committees

Committee makeups in both chambers changed significantly due to a vast number of newly elected legislators, as well as an increased number of Republicans in the body. Another significant change in the Senate is the enforcement of disallowing chairmen to serve on JFAC - this resulted in Sen. Kevin Cook remaining on the budget committee and moving from Chairman of Senate Commerce to Vice Chair of Senate Education. The remaining three chairmen formerly on the budget committee opted to keep their chairmanships and not serve on JFAC. Despite so many new changes to the legislative makeup, many committee chairmanships have carried over from the previous legislature. **New** positions of note are:

House Business – Jordan Redman, Vice Chair
House Education – Doug Pickett, Chairman; Dale Hawkins, Vice Chair
House State Affairs – Heather Scott, Vice Chair
Senate Agriculture – Tammy Nichols, Chairman; Christy Zito, Vice Chair
Senate Commerce & Human Resources – Dan Foreman, Chairman; Brian Lenney, Vice Chair
Senate Health & Welfare – Carl Bjerke, Vice Chair
Senate Education – Kevin Cook, Vice Chair
Senate Finance (JFAC) – Jim Woodward, Vice Chair

Committee makeups are available on the Legislature's website: <https://legislature.idaho.gov/committees/>

Budget Analysis

JFAC met in early November for brief budget overviews from some of Idaho's largest agencies, including the Department of Education, Department of Health & Welfare, and Office of Information Technology Services. Legislative Services Office Budget Manager, Keith Bybee, presented that the committee has a financial cushion, ending the current fiscal year with \$142.2 million in balance and over \$1.4 billion in reserves, including \$244 million for K-12. However, a potential economic downturn could challenge lawmakers, given earmarks on sales tax revenues for education and property tax relief. Governor Brad Little will present his budget recommendations on January 6, guiding JFAC's deliberations during daily hearings.

The state's largest budget, coming from the Department of Health & Welfare, will see changes from the agency's new director, Alex Adams, highlighting foster care and child welfare. DHW is seeking an increase of over \$50 million to the child welfare budget, aimed at increasing and strengthening preventative programs, improving placement stability, and better supporting foster parents.

JFAC's new composition lends itself to a more conservative approach to budget setting.

Hot Topics

- School Choice – potential for tax credits, education savings accounts and/or vouchers
 - Fights over water
 - Tax Cuts
 - Medicaid – proposals to repeal or add accountability measures
 - Parental rights and womens health
 - Procurement
 - Artificial intelligence

As always, we look forward to advocating on your behalf and are excited to hit the ground running in 2025.