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Week Four

Budget Highlight

The uncertainty around the newly instituted process continued late into the week. Concerns stemmed over the committee's January 16th approval of "bare bones" maintenance budgets that many felt were incomplete. Additionally, when JFAC approved the budgets, they had not approved the state's CEC, further complicating an already rocky rollout of the new process.

Friday, things appeared to be back on track as the committee began setting budgets. The approved budgets were larger than the ones previously approved and included additional maintenance and operations funding, as well as the approved CEC. The larger budgets were met with significant pushback by those touting a lack of fiscal conservatism, ensuring continued divisiveness on the committee.

Legislative Temperament

It was a busy week at the Statehouse where big topics took center stage.

Medicaid:

[HB 419](#), viewed as a Medicaid expansion repeal bill, was killed in the House Health & Welfare Committee. This legislation would have required the state to seek several waivers, including work requirements for the expansion population. The legislation then directed the state to repeal expansion unless all of the conditions outlined within the bill were met by July 1, 2025. Testimony was overwhelmingly against the legislation. Medicaid expansion was voter approved and polling shows that the measure is still strongly supported by Idahoans.

Fentanyl:

[HB 406](#), legislation to add Fentanyl to the mandatory minimum sentencing statute was approved by the House on a 55-13-2 vote. This has been a contentious issue over the last two years and tensions this year even garnered a warning from the Secretary of State, reminding lobbyists that both threats and bribes are a serious crime in the state, and to be mindful when advocating.

Guns in Schools:

[HB 415](#) allows public K-12 school employees to carry concealed weapons on school property upon completion of an enhanced concealed weapon training course. It also requires all K-12 public schools to remove "gun free zone" signage. The legislation cleared the House on a 53-16-1 (nearly party line) vote, despite being opposed by the teachers union, school boards association, and school resource officers.

The deadline for introduction of legislation into non-privileged committees is February 12th, ensuring agendas packed with RSs next week.

Nonprofit Highlight

The [American Heart Association](#) (AHA) is a non-profit organization established in 1924, focused on preventing heart disease and stroke. Through research funding, educational programs, and policy advocacy, the AHA works to promote cardiovascular health. The organization publishes treatment guidelines, conducts public health campaigns, and collaborates with partners to raise awareness, encourage healthy lifestyles, and improve overall well-being.

Idaho Fun Fact

Idaho is home to the world's tallest western white pine, as well as the largest stand of western white pines in North America.