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Idaho State Senate
BRENT HILL
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

July 6, 2020

Senator Patti Anne Lodge
18500 Symms Road
Caldwell, ID 83607

Dear Senator Lodge:

Due to the unprecedented circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges have emerged regarding a number of public policies. It is evident that our existing statutes never anticipated a crisis of this type and magnitude. To address these challenges, Speaker Bedke and I are establishing a number of interim working groups to study our existing policies, seek public input, and determine whether statutory changes or additions should be considered by the Legislature in the future. Each working group should prepare a report for the 2021 Legislature that will include proposed legislative options for the Legislature to evaluate and possibly recommendations from the working group.

It is my pleasure to appoint you, as the chair of the Senate State Affairs Committee, as co-chair of the "State Affairs Working Group" that will consist of the members of the germane Senate and House State Affairs committees. The working group will meet as needed to complete its assignment. Meetings may be held in person or remotely, at the co-chairs' discretion. If in-person meetings are held, arrangements need to be made for working group members to participate and vote remotely. All working group members may vote on actions proposed by the working group, but any motions must be passed by a majority of the Senate State Affairs Committee as well as a majority of the House State Affairs Committee. The working group should also evaluate whether a Special Session of the Legislature is needed to consider the working group's recommendations.

The issues to be considered by the working group include:

Election Dates and Processes

As demonstrated by this year's Primary Election, significant adjustments had to be made in the voting process using absentee ballots only and no polling locations, as well as in the timing of the election and reporting of results. Existing statutes appear to be inadequate or ambiguous to accommodate such situations. Of immediate concern are the elections to be conducted in August of this year.

Emergency Declaration Duration and Power

Existing statutes authorize the Governor to declare a state of emergency under certain circumstances. Based on our experience with the current pandemic, these statutes may need to be updated or amended to provide the Executive Branch with more specific direction and place clearer limits on this broad authority.

Constitutional Amendment for Special Legislative Sessions

In recent years, the Legislature has discussed the possibility of presenting a Constitutional Amendment authorizing the Legislature, under certain circumstances, to convene a Special Legislative Session during the interim when the Legislature is not in Regular Session. Amending our Constitution would, of course, require a vote of the people. The advantages and disadvantages, required criteria, recommended process, etc., of such an amendment should be deliberated by the working group.

Thank you for your willingness to dedicate your time and abilities to making this working group a success. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to visit with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brent Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop under the "H".

Brent Hill

cc: Speaker Scott Bedke
Legislative Services Office
Senator Mark Harris
Senator Chuck Winder
Senator Steve Vick
Senator Kelly Anthon
Senator Mary Souza
Senator Michelle Stennett
Senator Cherie Buckner-Webb