

Candidate Forum 2024 Follow Up

1. Please add your Name, Legislative District and the seat you are seeking:
2. What is your understanding of SB 1372 and how did you (or how would you) vote on it?
<http://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2024/legislation/S1372/>

| Name | Responses |
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| Edward A Easterling District 24, Senate | SB 1372 is an approbation bill. It transfers money from the General Fund to the Department of Agricultural. It provides money to the fund for pest control and the invasive species fund. This bill also provides money so the Department can hire 6 new full-time employees. As everyone knows an invasive mussel was found below the Twin Falls. If this mussel infestation is left uncontrolled it has the potential of costing the state hundreds of millions in damage to hydroelectric plants irrigation pumps and other infrastructures. I would have voted for this bill. |
| Linda Wright Hartgen District 25, Senate | <p>Quagga muscle budge bill was good and of course I voted yes. 6.6 million dollars. Would go for taking testing from 1400 tests around the state to 2800 tests. It would pay for washing stations and also update the 23 checking stations around the state. They basically were a shanty with a door and window and the females who worked there felt unsafe.</p> <p>More staff will be needed to man more washing and longer hours at the checking stations. The washing stations will be wash before you enter and when you pull your vessel out of the water.</p> <p>Quagga muscles can have 30,000 to 50,000 villagers or eggs at a time and this could be a huge issue and expense for our state if we can't get rid of them. 1 sq. meter of hard shells of quagga weigh 7200 lbs.</p> <p>Of course I voted for this, it is extremely important to our state.</p> |
| Chenele Dixon District 24, Seat A | <p>This bill funded multiple items critical to the ongoing operations of the Department of Agriculture. This department receives most of its funding from dedicated funds. In this case, funding comes from the agricultural industry paying fees to cover the costs of providing services to farms and ranches.</p> <p>For example, the Magic Valley is home to multiple dairy operations, and many of the dairies are vertically integrated. The industry has requested additional inspectors to help operations remain compliant with regulations and safe for dairy production. This budget also included additional funds to help with quagga mussel prevention. We're looking at hundreds of millions in expenses if we fail to prevent quagga mussels from gaining a foothold in Idaho.</p> <p>I voted yes.</p> |

3. What is your understanding of HB 421 and how did you (or how would you) vote on it?
<https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2024/legislation/H0421/>

| Name | Responses |
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| Edward A Easterling District 24, Senate | This bill requires that the state of Idaho recognizes that there are only two sexes female and male. It requires at birth that the sex of the child shall be determined by the genital that they are born with. I see a problem with this as a significant number of children are born with genital of both sexes. In this case when the person grows up and the state has made a decision that the person is say male but that person believes they are female then what does the state do? I believe the government has no business dictating what sex a person is or isn't. This is a medical issue not a government issue. |
| Linda Wright Hartgen District 25, Senate | For the purposes of Idaho law, we've established that one's biological sex has implications when it comes to the application of law. This language clarifies how someone meets the legal standard for male and female under Idaho law. |
| Ned Burns District 26, Seat A House of Representatives | This bill was presented to us by the bill sponsor as a way to have precise definitions in code. They are the opposite of precise. They are unscientific, they are out of touch with modern medical practice, and they push an extreme agenda. The bill language is so imprecise it has to address its own inconsistencies. It says that sometimes rare abnormalities occur in the development of a fetus that creates ambiguous genitalia. This is true. About 1-2% of births have sexual abnormalities that occur. That's roughly 40,000 Idahoans, which is approaching the population of a legislative district. It is inappropriate to write laws or code that minimize the existence of anyone. There was no need for this legislation, other than for extreme lawmakers to push hurtful agendas on a small population of Idahoans. I believe that this bill was the first step towards an even more nefarious bill next session if that lawmaker returns to the House. I did not support this legislation, nor will I ever support legislation that minimizes the existence of any Idahoan. We are all different and unique, and all have the same rights. I take offense to legislation that minimizes the existence of anyone, because if we allow laws to limit the rights of this group today, what is to stop future lawmakers from limiting the rights of another group in the future? Soon all of our rights will be limited. |
| Chenele Dixon District 24, Seat A | This bill clarified the definitions of male and female, both minor and adult, in Idaho law. It also stipulates that the legal definition of sex relies on biological differences related to reproduction. I voted yes. |

4. Everyone brings their life experiences and their faith journey with them when they become public office holders. How does your faith or belief system inform your votes, and is there a point when you draw the line between your personal belief system and the solemn duty of defending the Constitution for the equal protection of all the citizens of your community and state?

| Name | Responses |
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| Edward A Easterling District 24, Senate | I was brought up to keep my word no matter what. I have always kept my word even at times when it was detrimental to me. When your elected to office in Idaho you take an oath to uphold the United States Constitution and the Idaho Constitution. I believe in both of the Constitutiones and would do everything in my power to make everyone has equal protection under them. |
| Linda Wright Hartgen District 25, Senate | My faith plays a part in my being a legislator as it does in every part of my life. When I vote on bills I live by loving everyone not just those that reflect my values. I believe Jesus did the same thing. |
| Ned Burns District 26, Seat A House of Representatives | <p>I was raised in a Lutheran family and was very church going until reaching adulthood. In honesty, I am a sporadic church attender as an adult. I am still spiritual but much less dogmatic than I was when I was younger and I believe that is because I have been exposed to many differing faiths and beliefs than I had been in my youth. These differing faiths made me understand that no singular faith or belief system is the 'right' belief, but instead that the faith or belief system that any person adheres to is the right belief system for them.</p> <p>The Constitution was written agnostically by many of the greatest minds this country has ever known. There are definitely light references to a higher power in the Declaration of Independence (but none that are overtly Christian or any other religion), but zero references in the Constitution. Many early settlers from England and other European nation fled religiously authoritarian nations to practice their religious beliefs freely, and I still firmly support the freedom to freely practice religious beliefs by any and all adherents to any particular faith. I also strongly support the rights of those who chose to believe in no faith, as the Constitution is crystal clear that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion. This reads to me in the plain text of the language of the Constitution that no religious belief takes precedence over any other, nor does any religious belief take precedence over the absence of religious belief.</p> <p>I took a very solemn vow to defend the US and the Idaho Constitutions when I swore my oath of office, so if there is vote that we take that I believe is infringing on anyone's religious liberties (be it Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or any other religion) I will very likely be a no vote. A vote against any religious belief is a vote against all religious beliefs in the plain text of those Constitutions. All religions (or no religion) are created equal, and I will not force my personal beliefs or value systems on any citizen of District 26 or any other citizen of the state of Idaho through my vote.</p> |
| Chenele Dixon District 24, Seat A | My personal beliefs and faith are just that: mine. While my values and principles definitely influence how I approach serving as a legislator, my ultimate oath as an elected official rests on upholding our state and federal constitutions. |

5. Have you ever accepted donations from PACs (political action committees)?

| Name | Responses |
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| Edward A Easterling District 24, Senate | I've never accepted donations from any PAC, Companies, organizations, or individuals. The biggest problem with politics today is money. The people who have the most money usually are the winners. You can say most elections are bought. You want see any campaign signs TV ads or any advertising by me. If you want to know where I stand go to my website easterling4idaho.com. |
| Linda Wright Hartgen District 25, Senate | Yes |
| Ned Burns District 26, Seat A House of Representatives | Yes |
| Chenele Dixon District 24, Seat A | I accept donations from all parties that are reflective of my district's priorities. |

6. What is your understanding of HB 71 (2023 puberty blockers) and how did you (or how would you) vote on it?

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2023/legislation/H0071/>

| Name | Responses |
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| Edward A Easterling District 24, Senate | This is a medical issue and the government has no business dictating what medical procedures a person should have. As I stated earlier a significant number of people are born with both male and female gentile. In these cases it is at times necessary to perform surgery to assign the person with the sex they believe they are. I would vote against this bill. |
| Linda Wright Hartgen District 25, Senate | I voted against HB71. As an ardent follower of parental rights, I believed this took away that right. I would never want to see surgeries performed on children, but Idaho Hospitals don't do surgeries on children under 18 and very few over that age. If we had been talking mask mandates on children (which I also don't believe we should do) it would have been a different story. The parent and their doctor should get to make that decision. |
| Ned Burns District 26, Seat A House of Representatives | I voted against HB 71. It was a heavy handed attempt to prevent an exceedingly small population of people in Idaho to have access to medical care that is important to them. It was sold as an attempt to prevent child mutilation, however no doctor in Idaho has ever performed or performs sex change surgeries on minors. If the bill had only said that sex change surgeries are illegal to perform on minors, I would have supported that and voted for it. The issue arises when you bring medication into the picture. By not allowing medication to be issued you also bring into play the inability for doctors to treat precocious puberty, which is a condition in which puberty begins in children before age 8 in girls and 9 in boys as well as other developmental conditions that occur in human development. There was no allowance made for these rare medical conditions that arise. Members of the legislature who run these social issue bills don't consult with medical providers and think through all the issues that can arise, so we end up having to vote on bills that consistently have |

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| | <p>unintended consequences. These bills are written by out of state activist organizations who claim to have the best of intentions at heart, and then sent to Idaho lawmakers who enthusiastically run them without ever talking with Idaho doctors or families who will be negatively impacted by the legislation. There are no medical providers in the Idaho legislature, and over the last few years we have seen many bills affecting medical care in Idaho by people who have no business making medical decisions that will affect everyday Idahoans.</p> <p>I was also concerned with the fact that felony charges that can be brought against doctors. Doctors in consultation with patients and their families should never be charged with felonies for providing treatment that is necessary for any individual in this state.</p> |
| Chenele Dixon District 24, Seat A | H71 prevents the use of puberty blockers and surgery for anyone under the age of 18 for the purpose of changing genders. The bill does not block counseling/therapy or other non-invasive treatments. I voted in support of H71 because the health and science data we have available suggests we don't have a full understanding of the lifelong consequences associated with using these drugs for off-label use or the risks associated with surgery. |

7. What is your understanding of HB 374 (2023 Abortion) and how did you (or how would you) vote on it?
<https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2023/legislation/H0374/>

| Name | Responses |
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| Edward A Easterling District 24, Senate | This bill stops all abortions. When it comes to this issue the government has no business being involved in deciding whether or not a woman should have an abortion. That decision should be between the woman and man who impregnated her and her physician. This is extremely difficult decision for women. I believe all men and women have the right to make medical decisions without interference from the government. Why make abortions illegal and not vasectomy? |
| Linda Wright Hartgen District 25, Senate | <p>This legislation amends Idaho Code, Section 18-622 to clarify our existing definition of abortion and it eliminates the trigger provision and affirmative defense. It also provided clarification.</p> <p>I did vote for it but was not pleased with the bill. The mother's health should be given much more consideration.</p> |
| Ned Burns District 26, Seat A House of Representatives | <p>This bill was an attempt to create narrow exceptions to Idaho's abolition of abortion, but instead has caused nearly 50% of Idaho's maternal medicine providers to cease operations in Idaho, has caused multiple hospitals to close their labor and delivery departments, and has caused nearly \$1 million in taxpayer funds to be spent on legal fees because of its conflict with federal law.</p> <p>This is another classic example of Idaho lawmakers not consulting with medical providers and running legislation on behalf of special interest groups who do not understand the complexity of pregnancy. Nearly 1 in 10 pregnancies have complications that cause serious medical harm to mothers or the fetus. That is not an insignificant number. The language in the bill also defies medical practice and</p> |

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| | <p>definitions. The bill states that the treatment for an ectopic pregnancy (which is fatal if not treated) shall not be considered an abortion. The only treatment is literally an abortion. The bill sponsor changed the definition of the treatment to fit her agenda.</p> <p>Idaho lawmakers tried to create these very narrow conditions in which an abortion can be performed to prevent the death of the mother, but because of the hundreds of complications that can occur, they failed to take into account the health and life of the mother. Permanent damage has been caused to Idaho women and their future ability to grow their families has been impacted because of delays in treatment.</p> <p>There was attempts this legislative session to create a health exception, but again, because of special interest groups no bills were brought forth. If Idaho wants to be a state that outlaws elective abortions, that is something that while I disagree with, I could live with. However, without creating viable health exceptions for pregnant women HB 374 will cause significant medical issues for women who have complications in pregnancy. Many of these women also want to have a child, are excited to have a child, and when health complications occur, are devastated at the loss of that wanted child. By not providing immediate life and health saving care, we are endangering women. Doctors are now forced to consult with lawyers about whether or not they can perform care, lawyers are absolutely not doctors and don't have the same skill set doctors do. They should not be the ones making determinations on care.</p> <p>I did not vote on HB374. I along with all Democratic House members walked off the Floor of the House when the vote was occurring in protest. Idaho Republicans caused this issue in previous abortion legislation, and we were not going to assist them in creating an even worse problem in HB 374. Had I voted on it, I would have been a no. As we said during hearings and debate on the bill, it was rife with problems, and we ended up being proven correct by the ongoing lawsuits, the tremendous loss of medical providers, and the women who have been negatively impacted by this bad legislation.</p> |
| <p>Chenele Dixon District 24, Seat A</p> | <p>H374 clarified definitions in Idaho law to ensure that miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies, and other care do not meet the state's definition of providing an abortion. I voted in favor of ensuring that doctors can provide this critical care for their patients.</p> |

8. During the last legislative session, House Bill 602 targeted teachers' unions. Educators viewed this as demoralizing and exclusive action against them and their profession. How would you approach similar legislation affecting teachers and their unions in the future, and what specific commitments can you make to educators regarding your stance on such issues? <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2024/legislation/H0602/>

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| Edward A Easterling District 24, Senate | Everyone should have the right to belong to a union. In Idaho why can all of the fire departments and Rural Fire districts be allowed to belong to a union as well as police officers. If they can why can't teachers belong to a union? The United States Constitution guarantees the free association of people. I would support the right of the teachers or any group to belong to a union. |
| Linda Wright Hartgen District 25, Senate | The Senate did not vote on this bill, but I would have voted no if we had. Taking dues out of the teachers pay check has been done forever and is not an additional cost to the school. Using school rooms for meetings doesn't bother me, but if is an issue the local control of the school board can deal with it. |
| Ned Burns District 26, Seat A House of Representatives | <p>I will never vote against any labor union. A fundamental right of Americans is the right to organize. HB 602 was a flimsy attempt to minimize that right. A portion of the bill that I had significant issue with was saying public tax dollars can't go towards union dues. This was troublesome because it would have disallowed automatic deductions at payroll issuance. At the point of payroll, those dollars become the teacher's and are no longer public. This would be no different than creating a law saying it is illegal to have a payroll deduction go towards a retirement account or health insurance. Those dollars are no longer the property of the state or the taxpayer, they're the property of the individual who can choose to use them as they see fit.</p> <p>This bill also would have created disparity among other public unions like firefighters or police unions. Their salaries are also paid with public funds, but no effort was made to lay claim to how they choose to utilize their salaries.</p> <p>Unions benefit workers, whether through salary negotiations, health care benefits, or workplace disputes between labor and management. I proudly support unions and their workers. I will always be a pro labor vote as long as I'm in the legislature.</p> |
| Chenele Dixon District 24, Seat A | I voted against H602 because it targeted educators. I have no interest in singling out any group that wishes to exercise their First Amendment rights to affiliate with whom they choose and their right to speak freely. |

9. How did you (or how would you) vote on the School Choice bill HB 447:
<https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2024/legislation/H0447/>

| Name | Responses |
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| Edward A Easterling District 24, Senate | <p>In Idaho a person can send their children to any school be it public, private, or parochial. The question is who is required to pay for it. In Idaho the Idaho Constitution makes the government responsible for providing a free public education to all children ages 6 to 18. It's clear to me that the so called School Choice bill is about tax payers paying so that children who are already attending a school other than a public school can receive tax money to pay tuition and fees. Per the Idaho Constitution this is unconstitutional. Our public schools have been historically underfunded by the legislature. I would vote against any bill that reduces funding for our public schools. Again this is not about choice but it's about whether the state is required to pay for schools other then the public schools. I will vote against any bill such as HB 447.</p> |
| Linda Wright Hartgen District 25, Senate | <p>Obviously, it didn't go very far in this past session. I would have been a no vote. I am against vouchers/savings accounts because they are not allowed in our constitution. (Blaine Amendment).</p> |
| Ned Burns District 26, Seat A House of Representatives | <p>HB 447 was probably the most watched bill of the entire legislative session. It was introduced relatively early in the session and then languished as the sponsors were reading the tea leaves of the last session. In the 2023 legislative session there were 5 different bills that were introduced that would allow for taxpayer dollars to filter to private or religious schools. Each and every one was voted down in committee by the Education Committee. This legislative session, the people advocating for HB 447 tried their hand in the Revenue and Taxation Committee (on which I sit). The general idea behind the HB 447 was that parents who do not enroll their children in public schools and instead enroll them in private or parochial schools would be eligible for a first come, first serve tax credit. This bill was in direct violation of Section 1 Article 9 and Section 5 Article 9 of the Idaho Constitution. Relating to section 1, the Idaho Constitution plainly states that it "shall be the duty of the legislature of Idaho, to establish, and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public, free common schools. Relating to section 5, the Idaho Constitution clearly states that sectarian appropriations are prohibited. A yes vote on HB 447 would have violated the Constitution that I swore to uphold.</p> <p>I had significant issues with the first come, first serve nature of the tax credit. There are no other tax credits in use by the state that are that way. This creates a race to the front of the line and not all families are able to have a knowledgeable tax professional help them navigate the system. It creates inequity and those who are least likely to need a tax credit are the most likely to receive the benefit of it. I also was concerned about schools just raising their tuition by the amount of the tax credit. There was nothing in the bill that would have prevented that and in other states that have implemented education tax credits, we've seen this happen nearly universally. They also don't do what they purport to do. Supporters believe that an education tax credit will help families get their kids into private schools and out of public schools. In the vast majority of states the credit goes to families already enrolling their children in private schools, most often upwards of 75% of the credits</p> |

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| | <p>go to those families. If the goal is to get kids into private schools, there are different systems that can achieve that goal.</p> <p>I was the deciding vote against HB447 in committee and I stand by that vote. I will never cast a vote that blatantly violates the Constitution.</p> |
| Chenele Dixon District 24, Seat A | <p>Article IX, Section 1 of the Idaho Constitution says "... it shall be the duty of the legislature of Idaho to establish and maintain a general, uniform, and thorough system of public, free common schools." Currently, without constitutional support, an argument for increasing spending for private education falls flat.</p> <p>In 2023, S1038 was introduced to establish "Freedom in" Education Savings Accounts (ESA's). S1038 would have distributed your tax dollars for spending by home school parents or to apply towards private school tuition and it failed on the Senate Floor largely because it would be a direct violation of the Idaho Constitution. HB447 was another attempt to create a new, unchecked government program at the large cost of \$45,000,000 for just the first year. It would have no accountability for tax dollars being spent.</p> <p>As a parent who did homeschool, I would not have wanted tax payer dollars to pay for our family's choice to homeschool. Were a voucher program to ever pass, there must be accountability for where and how those dollars are spent just as they are with public and public charter schools.</p> <p>Additionally, in rural Idaho, where families must work every day to make a living and access to alternative options for K-12 are scarce, such a program only serves to further drive the socio-economic wedge between Boise and the rest of Idaho. I would have voted no on HB447.</p> |

10. There is a lot of political pressure being applied by special interest groups on office holders. At the moment of decision-making, if you knew that a bill was strongly backed by powerful special interests that either score your performance or have donated to your campaign, but also knew that the bill would have negative effects on your constituency, what would you do?

| Name | Responses |
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| Edward A Easterling District 24, Senate | This easy for me I am always going to do what is in the best interests of the people not special interests groups or people who have made donations. |
| Linda Wright Hartgen District 25, Senate | I use my constituents instead of powerful score keeping political groups. I make calls and research how my district would like me to vote. |
| Ned Burns District 26, Seat A House of Representatives | My most important special interest group is all of the citizens of District 26. They are my primary focus as I research and come to my conclusion on how I will vote on any piece of legislation that I have to vote on. There are certainly powerful special interest groups who vociferously advocate either for or against a particular piece of legislation on behalf of their clients, and I will regularly meet with lobbyists on both |

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| | <p>sides of these critical pieces of legislation. I listen to the pros and the cons of the issue, ask pointed questions of the lobbyists, and then once I have a decent level of understanding of the issue, I reach out to local stakeholders who will be affected either positively or negatively by the legislation as well as read each and every email on the issue that I receive. I put much more weight on emails and phone calls from constituents from D26 than from people outside the district. Once I believe that I have the requisite level of knowledge and constituent input I will let the special interest group or the lobbyist who has been advocating to me know where my vote will be on the issue. There is the rare occasion that some particularly compelling debate on the Floor will sway my vote, but that seldom happens (if it does, out of courtesy to the lobbyist if my vote is going to change I will let them know).</p> <p>One thing that I think is important to note about working in conjunction with special interest groups or lobbyists on an issue is that they rarely care about who particularly is voting either for or against any given issue, but rather do they have the votes needed to pass on either the House or Senate Floors and then get a signature of the Governor. The who voted for what is less necessary than the total vote count in the eyes of their client.</p> <p>I put little credence in any scoring metric by a special interest group, I do not base any vote I take on whether or not I (or my opponent) will receive a campaign donation. I take my votes on what is best for the citizens of District 26 and the citizens of Idaho, and whether or not it is constitutional.</p> |
| Chenele Dixon District 24, Seat A | Every vote comes down to balancing the different needs of my district. My priority is and will remain to serve my district first. |