

AARP Idaho

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AARP's WINNERS & LOSERS OF THE 2010 IDAHO LEGISLATIVE SESSION

State Retirees Receive COLA, While Idahoans Struggling with Health Care Costs Get a Roadblock to Relief

BOISE, Idaho – With the 2010 Idaho legislative session drawing to a close, the dust has settled on several key pieces of legislation that deliver good news and bad news for people across the state. Today, AARP Idaho unveiled its list of “2010 Legislative Session Winners and Losers,” highlighting bills that either help or hurt Idahoans.

THE WINNERS:

Idaho State Retirees: A cost of living adjustment in tight times for the elderly. After a hotly contested debate over the modest COLA, Senator John Andreason refused to give House Concurrent Resolution 42 a hearing, effectively delivering the increase to 38,000 state retirees. The resolution, introduced by Rep. Dennis Lake, marked the first time in Idaho history the legislature challenged a recommendation by the Public Employee Retirement System of Idaho (PERSI) board.

Grandparents: First in line to care for a child removed from their parent’s care. House Bill 610, introduced by Rep. Sharon Block, places grandparents at the top of the list for consideration as foster parents when children have been removed from their parent’s homes, expedites the process, and gives grandparents better legal standing to obtain custody. Signed into law.

Older Drivers: Family is focus of older driver issues. When a doctor thinks a patient should no longer be driving, they can contact the Idaho Dept. of Transportation and recommend their license be revoked. Senate Bill 1397 now puts patients first, helping them and their families have a conversation with the physician about the concerns and options before any action. The bill passed the Senate, did not get a hearing in the House, but is expected to be taken up and passed next legislative session.

Older voters: No I.D., no problem. House Bill 496, introduced by Rep. Mike Moyle, would require all voters to show photo I.D. before casting their ballot – the bill was revamped from last year to address the concerns of older voters, and now allows anyone without a photo I.D. to sign an affidavit. Passed both the Senate and House, sent to Governor.

THE LOSERS:

Idahoans struggling with high health care costs: A roadblock to relief when Idahoans need solutions. The Idaho Health Freedom Act (House Bill 391), introduced by Rep. Jim Clark, spends \$100,000 or more on a lawsuit against the federal government that stands little chance of success, and could cost Idaho its federal health care matching funds of \$1.6 billion, while keeping Idahoans from benefiting from measures that provide affordable access to health insurance and closes the Medicare Part D prescription drug “doughnut hole.” Signed into law, bad policy could deliver bad news.

Living wills, advance directives, or other end of life instructions: Learn someone else's conscience on your deathbed. The ill-conceived Freedom of Conscience bill (Senate Bill 1353), introduced by Senator Chuck Winder, will allow all health care professionals (from doctors to dieticians); to refuse to provide any "end of life care and treatment" that violates their "conscience." That means living wills, advance directives, or any other end of life instructions can be ignored. Despite thousands of AARP members and the public voicing strong opposition to the inclusion of the language in the bill, the bill became law.

Children, families & the elderly: Idaho's Medicaid safety net grows weaker with proposed cuts. As more Idahoans are forced to turn to Medicaid for health care services, \$22 million in cuts (over \$100 million coupled with the federal matching funds) will mean services and access get scaled back. While more cuts to health care providers who deliver critical home and community based services could prematurely force some older Idahoans into costly nursing homes.

AARP is Idaho's largest membership organization with 180,000 members.

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