

## Idaho Senate panel backs new naturopathic licensing bill

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Two groups of Idaho naturopaths that have continued to battle for decades over licensing failed to show any signs of patching up their differences while testifying in front of lawmakers over a proposed accrediting bill.

The Senate Health and Welfare Committee narrowly approved sending HB 181 on Monday to the Senate floor. The legislation —which creates a new naturopath licensing process in Idaho— has already squeezed passed the House.

However, the 5-4 vote only sends the bill directly to be amended before the full Senate can vote. That means if the Senate changes the bill, it will need to be sent back to the House.

The new bill is backed by the Idaho Chapter of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (IAANP), but it's staunchly opposed by the Idaho Association of Naturopathic Physicians (IANP). The two groups have disagreed about training and education standards for years, particularly since the Idaho Legislature approved naturopathic licensing in 2005.

"I'm going to close my eyes and vote to send it to the amending order and hope we can think of something after working on it for 35 years," said Sen. Patti Anne Lodge, R-Huston, adding that she hasn't seen opposing parties agree on much.

In 2005, naturopaths argued they wanted to add legitimacy to their profession by creating licenses. In turn, this would allow those qualified to write prescriptions and perform minor operations.

IAANP lobbyist Kris Ellis said more than a dozen other states had some sort of naturopathic licensing laws, including Oregon, Washington, Montana and Utah.

"It's not going to affect their practice, this only expands privilege," Ellis said. "If you're writing a prescription right now and you don't have a license, you're doing that illegally."

Idaho naturopaths offer such modalities as acupuncture, homeopathic remedies and colon hydrotherapy.

But conflicting opinions on necessary education requirements has prevented the five-member Board of Naturopathic Medical Examiners from drafting rules on how to obtain and regulate a license for the past 10 years. IAANP is pushing for physicians to attend a handful of naturopathy colleges accredited in the United States and Canada. Meanwhile, the IANP says such a law unfairly excludes people with experience in the field but who don't have formal education from the accredited school.

"I just don't know where we're going to come up with a solution," said Sen. Sheryl Nuxoll, R-Cottonwood, who voted against sending the bill to the Senate and instead, supported holding the bill in committee

The new bill doesn't replace the 2005 law. Instead, it would create a separate process that would have its own board and education requirements. Those who failed to qualify under the new legislation would still be allowed to operate their business under the former law.

Alvin Funk, a former member of the naturopathic board, said 15 licenses have been issued under the 2005 law. But roughly 100 naturopaths practice in the state.

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