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BOARD ACTION ON STATE ESSER PLAN POSTPONED

The Idaho State Board of Education today voted to postpone approval of its plan to use over \$146 million in federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds made available through the American Rescue Plan Act signed into law earlier this year.

ESSER funds can be put to various uses to help school districts keep schools operating safely and to address problems such as “unfinished learning” - students who fell behind during pandemic.

State ESSER plans are due to be submitted to the federal government on Monday, June 7, but the State Board was granted an extension by the U.S. Department of Education. The Board will consider approval of the plan during its regular Board meeting on June 16.

“I appreciate the work that the team that the Superintendent put together has done in pulling this plan together in a short time window,” Board President Kurt Liebich said. “There was just a really quick turnaround, once we got the public comment, the Board had less than 24 hours to review it. We just felt like it was prudent to give ourselves time to think strategically about what is in the plan and how we can best use these resources for our students and schools.”

In other actions, the Board approved one year contract extensions for the presidents of Idaho's four-year institutions but did not include increases in pay.

“This Board is very pleased with the performance of our higher education institutions during the pandemic,” Board President Liebich said. “The decision not to adjust salaries is simply based on discussions with our presidents and the fact that we had to ask our institutions to make huge sacrifices this year. We had to implement furloughs and let many longtime dedicated employees go. I think all of our presidents recognize that when you are the leader of an institution and you ask your team to make sacrifices, it's not the right time to adjust compensation and I admire the leadership that our presidents provided.”

The Board did grant state approved compensation adjustments to the Board's executive director and to the administrators of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division of Career Technical Education.

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